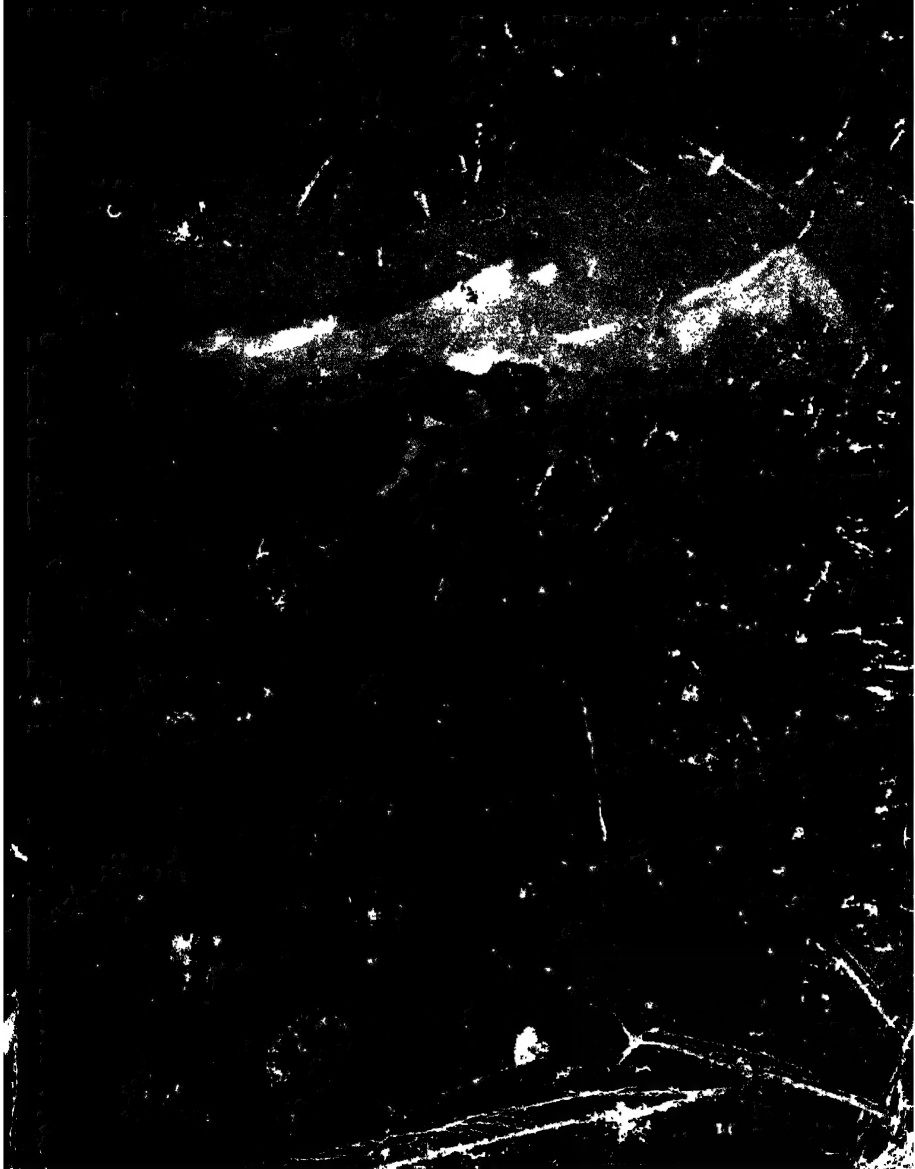


# DAYS OF ELK AND BUFFALO





*Days of Elk and  
Buffalo*

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Arco Publishers  
Limited



London: 1915







The authoress and her father.

# Days of Elk and Buffalo

A Colorado  
Childhood

"Oh, the days of elk and buffalo!  
It fills my heart with pain  
To know these days are past and gone  
To never come again."  
*(Traditional Western Ballad)*

Florence  
Hayes Turner

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TO THE MEMORY OF MY FATHER  
AND  
TO MY SISTER, EVELYN ELWIN  
THIS BOOK IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED



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# I

## THE PINTO PONY

MY GRANDFATHER, Major Emery S. Turner, became in civilian life a promoter. In this somewhat esoteric choice of careers he appears to have been mainly successful, although it must be admitted that, as a business man, he was less distinguished than as a soldier. Serving under General Meade in the Union Army during the Civil War, he lost his right arm at the battle of Gettysburg, and is also alleged to have been on duty in or near Ford's Theatre the night of President Lincoln's assassination. I have not been able to prove this suggestion beyond ascertaining that a detail of the Union Light Guard patrolled the street outside the theatre on that fateful evening. However, one of my grandfather's treasures was an American flag which we were led to believe had been part of the decoration in Lincoln's box. Whatever the fact, this trophy remained in my family's possession until 1936 when my Aunt Marie presented it to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington.

A promoter, according to Webster's dictionary, is also an encourager, an abettor, and a lobbyist; someone who "alone or with others, takes the preliminary steps in a scheme or undertaking for the organisation of a company, floating of bonds, stocks or the carrying out of any business projects." My father, writing on this subject years later in his diary, refers to it simply as "selling nothing for something," an interpretation which makes one realise that my grandfather, despite his appearance of an officer and a gentleman, possessed talents that were other than conventional.

With declining years, Emery Turner acquired a certain look of benevolence which, together with the poignancy of his empty

sleeve, his neat, white beard and the calm gaze of his eyes behind their black-ribboned pince-nez, must have inspired confidence in anyone with whom he had dealings. Yet he never succeeded in "promoting" affection in his grandchildren, and my own memory of him is one of a discomfiting presence, the touch of cold fingers and an indefinable smell which held in it the traces of bay rum. There were gifts to us as well but, since the reception of these involved a stringent good behaviour on our part and an insistence on gratitude which we did not feel, my grandfather's well-meant offerings did nothing towards strengthening our relationship.

Nevertheless, in spite of this lack of affection, which was in later years to be reinforced by a bitter quarrel between Emery and my own father, I shall always feel a kind of detached gratitude towards my grandfather, because without his proclivity for "selling nothing for something" there would have been no excursion to the West, no adventure, no beginning to a dream which, for my father and his children, became reality twenty years later in the purchase of Trinchera Ranch.

In 1885 Emery gathered up his wife, his daughters and his son and set off from New York, where they lived, to travel to the arid and sparsely inhabited Montezuma Valley in Southern Colorado. His intention was to investigate the possibilities of irrigating the valley and turning it into rich farmland which could then be sold to land-hungry Easterners. One cannot help but admire his tenacity and the imagination behind it, but the move could scarcely have endeared him to his family, with the exception of my father, who was then fourteen. The town of Cortez where they settled consisted of a handful of adobe-mud or sandstone houses, a small bank-cum-post-office and a saloon. The population was mainly Mexican, although at week-ends visiting Indians lent colour to the dusty main streets. The surrounding flats stretched north to the Sangre de Cristo mountains, south to Mesa Verde, and there was little in that huge expanse of sandy ground and rabbit brush to produce a vision of rich fields of oats, hay and barley. Yet a similar scheme had already been carried out with complete success in the San Luis Valley just north of Montezuma

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County, a part of the world which, in later years, I was to know and love. My grandfather was, therefore, not without reason in his dramatic move although, since as a promoter his main interest lay in finding stockholders, someone else would presumably dig the ditches.

The family settled down fairly comfortably in a low, wooden house under the scattered shade of a few cottonwood trees, a luxury in that waterless land. Near the house a plank bridge, wide enough for carriage wheels, crossed the whispering trickle of a small stream, and the dirt road rolled away towards a horizon that shimmered with mirage. It was a desolate, wasting land, close to the earth's bone, but there was about it a wild and special beauty, a suggestion of hidden adventure and discovery that very soon captured my father's imagination and sent him off on a journey which he was never to regret.

Besides Emery and my father, David Bryant Turner, the family consisted of my grandmother, Mary, two daughters—Marie, then eighteen or nineteen, Edith, sixteen—and a young man who had been brought along, an unwilling hostage to culture, as tutor for my father. Little has ever been recorded about this young man beyond the fact that he was not popular with his pupil, over whom he appeared to have no authority whatever.

My Aunt Marie, whom we called Tante, was then an attractive young woman of little imagination and strong will. She quickly developed a loathing for the reaching landscape, a loathing which she kept all her life, transferring it later without difficulty to Trinchera Ranch, which she always maintained was hell on earth and which she visited only once in her lifetime. In maturity she was an extremely rich woman with a liking for power, large cars and champagne (from which she invariably removed the bubbles by means of a swizzle-stick), and it is hard for me to picture Tante in the small frame house with its modest group of trees, their leaves the only thing moving between her despairing eyes and the distant Sangre de Cristo mountains, unless a Mexican shepherd happened to wander by. It would not have been out of character for her to hurry back to the house, banging the screen

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door of the low porch behind her and rush to her room, there to lie on her bed given over to migraine and misery. There were, by way of compensation, the 'garrison dances at Fort Lewis, to which my aunts were driven in a buckboard over the cracked yellow mud of the long-dried stream beds, the buckboard's wheels sinking deep in the sandy ruts or bumping over the stubborn roots of sagebrush bushes.

"The dust," Tante would say to me, on one of her rare excursions into the past, "it was simply hideous. We were filthy before we even arrived at the dance."

Poor Tante! With what distaste she must have endured the whole episode, a distaste only partly assuaged by the admiration which was undoubtedly bestowed upon her by all the officers of the garrison.

My Aunt Edith, on the other hand, would certainly have enjoyed the affair, viewing the more uncomfortable aspects with the detached humour characteristic of her personality. On arrival at Fort Lewis she would probably have jumped down from the buckboard, shaken out the dusty ruffles of her impractical garments and plunged into the evening's gaiety without a trace of inhibition. Although Aunt Edith had no pretension to beauty with her small upturned nose, round face and candid blue eyes, there was about her a warmth and direct charm of manner that few people could resist. There was also in her character a measure of stern self-discipline which, when applied to others, amounted to dogma, and she was capable of a sudden but brief intolerance which was quite out of keeping with the rest of her personality.

This self-discipline, which my father also possessed to another degree (for brother and sister were very alike), must have derived from the teaching of my grandmother, Mary Boyce Turner, the silent and undoubtedly patient attendant of all my grandfather's undertakings. Mary Turner has always been for me a shadowy figure. Not only did she die long before I was born but none of her children talked about her enough to form a clear portrait in my mind. The only photograph I have seen of her shows a small, plain woman with a gentle brow and sensitive mouth.

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From my father I learned that she was deeply religious, and the emphasis in her children's upbringing was on the difference between right and wrong in the Christian sense. There must have been tremendous force of character behind that gentle exterior, but she was also capable of inspiring a love which, in the case of my father, amounted to adoration. For it was from my grandmother that Aunt Edith and my father inherited their sense of the absurd, a quality notably lacking in both Tante and my grandfather. Mary Boyce Turner was, after all, half Irish, her own father having emigrated to Baltimore, Maryland, where he successfully made wagons at a time when wagons were unquestionably in demand. In talking of her forebears Tante invariably bypassed the wagon-making branch of her family, alighting instead upon a far-distant Turner who voyaged to America on the *Mayflower*. That there was a Turner is indisputable—that he had anything to do with us is highly unlikely.

At the time of the Montezuma Valley episode, my father, David Bryant Turner, was a wiry fourteen-year-old, small for his age but well proportioned and strong. He was an exceptionally handsome boy with the same sensitive mouth as his mother, large blue-grey eyes, beautiful in their intelligence, and brown hair that waved back from an unusually high forehead. Even in early photographs, particularly ~~is one~~ taken in Cortez astride a Morgan pony, the peaked ugliness of a frontier hat jammed over his brow, there is a look of vitality about him, a gaze of mischievous independence which must have contributed greatly to his tutor's sense of frustration.

My father accompanied his sisters to Fort Lewis on several occasions and his behaviour during one of these festive evenings was to become a favourite family story. The room where the dance took place was heated on chilly nights by two Franklin stoves, one at each end, their sturdy black pipes sprouting up through the roof. It was a room whose duplicate could be found in any Western fort, although at Fort Sumner, just over the border into Lincoln County, New Mexico, only five years before, there had taken place scenes of such dramatic violence that my father, remembering, must have found his present surroundings

and the whirling dancers very tame in comparison. For it was at Fort Sumner that William H. Bonney, known as Billy the Kid, the most famous outlaw and desperado of the South-west, had shot and killed the sheriff of Lincoln County and escaped, with his followers, to continue a career of cattle stealing and incidental murders, twenty-one of which were by his own hand. One imagines my father, a restless adolescent, sitting on one of the wooden benches that lined the room, his mind busy with the exciting story of a cold-blooded killer who was, nevertheless—as his biographers have written—"in manner quiet and unassuming," with "many friends, most of whom found an excuse for his outlawry"; a man of "unstudied grace of movement," fearless, intelligent and strong, the perfect hero for a lad who was still too young to measure cold-blooded murder in any terms save those of fantasy.

It must have been a strong desire for emulation, even in a minor capacity, that sent my father from one Franklin stove to another, leaving behind him with each trip a liberal sprinkling of cayenne pepper over the red-hot surfaces. Within a short time the fumes of the burning pepper had cleared the room of soldiers and their strangled partners as successfully as the famous Lincoln County gun-battle, except that the consequences to my father were, at the time, more disciplinary than those which immediately befell Billy the Kid, who, after all, did escape.

The pepper incident was among the first of a series in which it was obvious that my father was attempting to establish himself as an individual, independent of other people's authority. In this campaign it was evident that the long-suffering tutor had no place. Time after time, my father managed to evade his surveillance until the day came when the tutor returned alone from a ride to announce that his pupil had disappeared across the desert with a gang of desperadoes, shouting that he would come home when he felt like it.

Curiously enough, there seems to have been no hue and cry over the matter. One imagines my grandmother saying, with a calm she may not have felt, "Bryant is capable of looking after himself," and no immediate steps were taken to find her wilful son.

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The tutor, meanwhile—with an asperity understandable in the circumstances—departed for New York, thereby presenting my father with a victory which he was not to learn about for a week. During those seven days and nights of his absence attempts were made to find my father but, in such a thinly settled district, it was not an easy matter. There were scarcely any neighbours to rouse; my grandfather may have felt some embarrassment about calling out the militia; and even with a mounted posse to help in the search, which direction in that wide, trackless land were they to take? My father had managed to hide himself with the success worthy of a mountain lion.

When, finally, he did return at the end of the week, he was dirty, tired and riding a pinto pony which no one had seen before.

"They gave him to me," he replied to the stern question of Emery, more intent on his son's possible guilt than his safety.

"They," insisted my father, were his friends. Yes, they might be cattle thieves, probably desperadoes, certainly they knew how to shoot well. They had taught him to use a gun; they had also shown him rope tricks and how to throw a lariat over a galloping horse. He had slept with them, rolled in a blanket on the ground, eaten with them, sat at their camp fire listening enraptured to their tales. During the day they had ridden after cattle. No, he did not know to whom the cattle belonged. He hadn't thought about it. Nor did he know the names of any of the men, of whom there were half a dozen, but he thought one of them might be Billy the Kid. It had been a week of pure joy and unadulterated freedom, an experience of which the poetry and the paradox influenced my father's thinking for the rest of his life and started him on the track of a liberal philosophy—in spite of what happened later that night.

The pinto pony was put away in the barn; my father was packed off to bed, where he slept exhaustedly. Near dawn he was awakened by a sound of beating hooves on the wooden bridge near their house, and staggered sleepily to the porch in time to see a group of riders vanishing into the thinning darkness across the desert. He went back to bed and it was not until later

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that morning, that, lousing himself from a deep sleep, he learned of his friends' treachery. The pinto pony had been stolen back, and as though to prove they were really desperadoes, the Cortez bank-and-post-office had been robbed. It must have been a moment of terrible doubt for my father, but the week's happiness was sustained, the scales tipping easily in favour of that magic episode lifted out of the context of reality.

Whenever, at our urgent request, my father related the story to us, he would insist that one of the men had been Billy the Kid, and we always believed him. Now I must—alas—confess to myself that he was wrong, for during my research for this book I have discovered that Billy the Kid was shot and killed while trying to escape in 1881, and my father's experience with the desperadoes took place in 1885. It is possible, however, that these men were part of the McSween faction, a group led by Billy the Kid until his death, who undoubtedly continued their marauding in Colorado and New Mexico for a long time afterwards. Cattle stealing was prevalent even in my lifetime; and bank robberies have never stopped.

It would have made a good story if it had been Billy the Kid, and no doubt my father knew it, for there was a flair for drama in his character which often showed itself in a careless disregard for detail amounting, in my mind, to poetic licence. It could also have been the result of his Irish ancestry.

Less than a year after all this happened, Emery Turner decided that his undertaking had been a failure and he returned, disappointedly, to New York. There was probably not much reluctance shown by his family; with the exception of my father, their existence must have been a lonely one. Perhaps I should except my Aunt Edith too, for, years later, she was to share with my father in the huge, imaginative adventure of the Trinchera Ranch and it was probably in Montezuma that her love of the West had its beginnings.

In 1929 I made a trip with my father to New Mexico and we stopped off briefly in Cortez. The little house was as I had always pictured it, the ruts still deep in the sandy road, the cottonwood trees drooping their shiny leaves over the wooden bridge. We



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did not get out of the car, for my father was not well. Neither of us said anything for a minute and the silence was engulfing. To the south the great thunder-heads rolled up over the horizon and heat waves zigzagged away into the distance.

My father was staring at the house, a look of gentle bewilderment on his face, and I wondered what memories were passing through his mind. Finally he turned to me, a half-smile on his lips.

"It's so small," he said. "So much smaller than I remember." Perhaps at that moment he buried Billy the Kid for ever.

## II

### EARLY HISTORY

WEST OF the Great Plains, where the immense chain of the Rocky Mountains crosses southern Colorado, there lies some of the most impressively beautiful and isolated country in the world. To my deep personal satisfaction, it is a part of the United States which has not yet entirely succumbed to discovery or exploitation in the material sense; nor yet become a Western Playground, as the Chamber of Commerce might put it; and if the glow of rockets on their way to the Moon or Mars from the neighbouring New Mexican desert lights up the snow-banks of Trinchera Peak, it can only be a momentary publicity. To me those wild canyons remain as triumphantly inaccessible as they were in my childhood, their isolation no less a part of the realm of fantasy than the distant surfaces of the Moon itself.

My attitude is, of course, wholly selfish, even unreasonable, since we as a family were guilty of our own type of exploitation. For sixteen years we lived in a delicious privacy and mindless arrogance on the vast acreage of Trinchera Ranch, without being fully aware of the breadth of such an experience. Furthermore, there were times when we guarded our privileged existence with a jealousy which might well be construed by those less fortunate as a latter-day feudalism. I have all my adult life disliked the sight of "Private Property" signs, but it would be the rankest hypocrisy to ignore the fact that this dislike is in part due to my now being on the other side of the sign. If I obey the sign's admonishment and "keep off," it is mainly because I now identify myself in this matter with the majority. Still my irritation remains, for one of the earliest lessons my father taught me was to respect all natural beauty. This respect and a lifelong love

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of the countryside was my father's heritage to his children. If exploitation is to be measured in terms of material gain, my father was innocent, for he died bankrupt. Yet the value of this heritage has increased for me with the passage of the years, and I now see in my father's defeat nothing of the bitterness of a failed ambition, but only a humility born of wisdom.

The history of Trinchera Ranch goes back to the 1840s, a time when there was no State of Colorado, but only Colorado Territory, an enormous area of land comprised of portions of the Louisiana Purchase and the Texas and Mexican Cessions. Close to what is now the southern border between the States of Colorado and New Mexico, part of the Mexican Cession, lay San Luis Park, one of a huge system of natural parks lying at an elevation of 6,000 to 8,000 feet between the Sierra Madre mountains on the east and the San Juan mountains on the west. It is still (for it cannot have changed since I knew it) a country of incredible beauty and richness, the wild grass, curing as it stands to a ripe gold, the wild flowers of a brief, lush spring covering the upland meadows in a sweep of ravishing colours. Mountain springs feed the dark lakes where bravers have built their dams, and the thick growth of pines, firs, spruce and quaking aspens climb steeply to where grey shale slides down from the lingering banks of a late snow. All around, protective and silent as eternity, rises the serrated rim of mountain peaks.

During a period of the West's history when there was still scope for exploration and settlement, this particular wilderness attracted a number of enterprising men, from miners to bishops. One of them, a certain Charles Beaubien, French by birth, but becoming a naturalised Mexican citizen, appears to have been so inspired by the potential value of San Luis Park that he applied to the Mexican Government for the richest portion of it. His application succeeded and in 1845 he received from the Mexican Governor-General a grant of land amounting to 1,200,000 acres and known from then on as the Sangre de Cristo Grant. Monsieur Beaubien's triumph was not altogether a personal one. In a desperate effort to preserve her northern possessions through colonisation, Mexico had awarded several large grants, of which

Sangre de Cristo was only one. The grant was confirmed by special Act of Congress on July 21, 1860, after the part of Mexico in which it lay was ceded to the United States by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. On Beaubien's death, Sangre de Cristo passed into the hands of William Gilpin, Governor of Colorado Territory, the title, as recorded by the Hon. W. M. Evarts, Attorney-General of the United States, being "free from exception." It does not seem unreasonable to construe this phrase to mean that Sangre de Cristo was now ready for exploitation, and when one discovers that the grant became known widely as another El Dorado, it is plain that the interest of those early explorers was centred on another gold than that of the sun-dried grasses.

In a book published privately in London in 1869 by the Territorial Board of Immigration, bearing the laborious title of *Colorado, Its Resources, Parks and Prospects as a New Field for Emigration With an Account of the Trenchera and Costilla Estates in the San Luis Park*, it is obvious that the interest in Sangre de Cristo had travelled farther afield than the United States. The compilers of this book have, however, drawn largely for their material from the recorded correspondence and reports of Americans who had already surveyed the territory. These letters and reports make absorbing yet sorry reading, for they reveal a worried greed, a kind of chop-licking anxiety, as though the writers, confronted by potentialities too exciting or too difficult for their own indifferent powers, must call upon the aid of others in order to keep the treasure within their reach.

"The value of the whole grant cannot be estimated," writes Major Whitsett, one of Colorado's earliest colonists and the late Recorder of Denver. "Like a very large diamond it is too valuable to find ready purchasers. . . I am not familiar with the extent and value of the famous estates of the world; but this one I think must be one of the most valuable, if not the most valuable."

This somewhat drunken phrasology is not confined to Major Whitsett. Governor Gilpin, after a scholarly treatise on the physical structure of the land, its mineral possibilities (quartz, gold,

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silver, copper, lead and gypsum), the fertility of its soil, the purity of its water, the value of its timber, suddenly launches out with these words: "All infections and miasmas, of both spirit and body, are banished, as it were, by the perpetual brilliancy and salubrity of the atmosphere and the landscape, whose unfailing beauty and tonic taste stimulate and invite the physical and mental energies to perpetual activity."

A delegate to Congress, Mr. A. A. Bradford, remarks on the grant's "pastoral excellence" and a certain Bishop Kingsley writes of seeing strawberries in bloom two miles up. "There never was," he continues, "a finer field for the display of a painter's talent. The scenery in this country is the grandest that can be conceived of."

I find Bishop Kingsley's remarks pleasantly disinterested, certainly they have not the over-eagerness to be found in the words of a colleague, Bishop Simpson, who published excitedly in the *Christian Advocate*, in 1862, his belief that "silver, copper, cinnebar, galena, plumbago, antimony, coal and salt abound." Surely, he writes wistfully, anyone with "fifty thousand dollars in capital could quickly double it."

Reading the comments of these various men, I do not find it difficult to picture my grandfather in their company, but at about this time he was engaged in a different kind of activity, for the smoke of battle was heavy over Chattanooga and Gettysburg.

These earlier promoters were in the main agreed upon one point, and that was the cheapness of labour. Surveyors, mining engineers, professors, geologists and congressmen all comment upon the simplicity with which exploitation could be carried out by reason of Sangre de Cristo's Mexican population, this simplicity appearing to be their only justification for the presence of the Mexicans (the descendants of the Conquistadores) in a country which only two years before had belonged to Mexico. At no time, I notice, is there any mention of Indians. A hint of their presence would have greatly endangered any possibility of a sale, and it was no doubt assumed that since their extermination was well under way, the subject of such an indigenous population was better left alone.

Major Whitsett, whom I have already quoted, was convinced that only a small number of "the right kind of Americans" could quickly crowd out the Mexicans (presumably those not needed for labour), and a Mr. Henderson, the late Recorder of Costilla County, in a letter to Isaac Hartshorn, Esq., states flatly: "The population of Sangre de Cristo Grant is about 1,200. Of this number 100 are Americans; the rest are Mexicans, who have strange customs; they are a degenerate and priest-ridden race."

Nevertheless, despite their palpable desire to utilise Sangre de Cristo for personal gain, all of these men from Governor Gilpin with his "salubrity" to the gentle enthusiasms of Bishop Kingsley have shown that they were each one affected emotionally by their journeys. For the more imaginative among them it must have seemed like an earthly Paradise, since, by whichever route they chose to attain their goal, through whichever of the mountain passes, Raton Poncha, Mosca or La Veta, the same heart-stopping view burst upon them—range upon range of timbered ridges rising to the sharp isolation of mountain peaks: Culebra, Sierra Blanca, the twin Spanish Peaks (known by the Indians as "Hajatolla" or the "Breasts of the World"), Trinchera, each one guarding below its shadowed slopes the hidden secret of an exquisite, upland meadow. They would surely have dismounted to look for a moment, their lungs drawing in the pure rarefied air of Colorado, while over Sierra Blanca in the west the sky darkened slowly and a dying sun lit with sudden crimson the last snow-banks, causing them more fully to understand why the Mexicans had named these mountains the "Blood of Christ." It would have been their growing awareness of the immeasurable stillness around that would send them back to their horses, anxious for movement and sound to give them a secure landmark for their senses. I know myself the nature of that stillness, because I have experienced it often as a child and later. It can be inimical and frightening, emphasising mortality, and in order to meet it without panic, one must be already half-way to Pantheism.

Once more within the range of human habitation and voices, these early explorers rallied their emotional experiences into the

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form of enthusiastic letters, some of which I have quoted, where occasional gross inaccuracies may well have been the last traces of their recent experience with a hostile wilderness.

"Snow rarely ever attains a depth of more than a foot," lied Mr. Henderson placatingly, while Dr. E. M'Clellan, Fort Garland's post-surgeon, writes in 1868, "The climate is delicious, although the winter is said to be severe; last summer while all the world was melting, we had no uncomfortable day; and I believe I am correct in stating that during the past eight years but one death has occurred near this post from natural causes (i.e. disease)."

Pondering on that last remarkable statement, I think I now understand Dr. M'Clellan's meaning. In a rugged garrison settlement where Spencer's *First Principles* most certainly held sway, it is perfectly possible that death from disease was less frequent than death from a well-placed knife, a bullet, an arrow, or even just alcohol. To be shot in the back, or in the front for that matter, is not, as anyone will admit, a natural way to die.

Twelve hundred miles away the Civil War came to an end and with it Emery Turner's life as a soldier. One wonders how many rumours of the fabulous Sangre de Cristo reached his ears. Most of the letters and reports I have quoted were written at the request of interested speculators in the Eastern States and, besides the published material available, there must have been considerable talk which could not have failed to come to my grandfather's attention, thus laying the groundwork for his excursion to the Montezuma Valley. It is interesting to consider why he chose this dry and desolate part of Colorado instead of the country farther north. Perhaps he was aware that his predecessors had already tapped the richest veins. Promoting in Sangre de Cristo was on a large scale. Not only was there Governor Gilpin, leader of them all, whose motives appear to have been somewhat lofty, as the title of his book, *Mission of the North American People*, suggests but General William Palmer, Treasurer of the Union Pacific Railroad, now entered the competition. Scouting fresher and greener pastures, he had resigned his former positions in order to promote between 1870 and 1872 the construction of a railroad

leading from Denver into the Sangre de Cristo Grant. At the same time in 1871 he was busy founding Colorado Springs, the town where I was to live so much of my childhood.

My father and Colorado Springs made their appearance in the world simultaneously, the former 1,200 miles away in Brooklyn, New York. As a small boy Bryant Turner seems to have been no different from other small boys except for a tendency for adventuring which frequently exposed him to downright physical danger. He once, at the age of eleven, jumped into the water from the high bluffs overlooking the Hudson River, a feat of daring which earned him not so much praise as anger. Photographs taken at that age show him in choirboy's rig, his face innocent above the white collar, but an early mischief was already beginning to show in his large eyes, and there can be no doubt that he was at times a trial to his parents. During that period of his existence he underwent a rigorous exposure to formalised religion, Emery and his wife being Episcopalians.

"We had to go to church three times on Sundays," he used to tell me; adding in a tone of disgust, "wearing white gloves!"

This insistence on white-gloved religion resulted in my father turning his back on it in maturity and, except for the occasion of my mother's funeral, I never once knew him to set foot inside a church. His quiet but persistent denial of the superficial aspects of religion impressed me greatly. Rather to my chagrin, he never interfered with his children's religious upbringing as conducted, after my mother's death, by Aunt Edith, who seems to have been less able to throw off her parents' teaching. We were all sent to Sunday school and church with tedious regularity until, with the wonderful advent in our lives of Trinchera Ranch, where there were no churches, we were able during the summer to fling religious teaching to the skies and set our own spiritual course as freely as the wind that blew through the canyons. However, we continued, at my Aunt Edith's house, to say grace before meals.

After Emery Turner's return from Cortez, my father's education proceeded along normal lines at a school in Newberg, New York. Then, on the verge of entering for Harvard, he suddenly departed for Europe in the same carefree manner with which he



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had eluded his frustrated tutor to accompany the desperadoes in Colorado. After working his way across on a cattle boat, he began a roaming, vagabond life, a knapsack on his back, his travels taking him all over Europe, east to New Zealand and back finally to England, where he stayed with Aunt Edith, now a Mrs. Daniels and domiciled in London.

In England his interest in horses, an interest which had never entirely left him, never perhaps since the pinto pony, was stimulated by visits to some of the big racing stables, and for the first time he began to consider the possibility of earning his living as a professional rider. Since he was only five feet eight inches tall, and small boned, the possibility of becoming a steeplechase jockey did not seem too remote.

Once back in the United States, he drifted from job to job. One of them was to write feature articles for a Philadelphia newspaper, his subjects notably about the under-privileged. In 1898 he was living in Wilmington, Delaware, managing one of Emery's promotion schemes which had to do with acetylene gas. It is at this juncture that he wrote gloomily of his disapproval of "selling nothing for something." Shortly afterwards, without informing my grandfather, he handed over the keys of the office to a subordinate, wrote a farewell note and presented himself as a simple stable apprentice to a Mr. W. F. Presgrave, manager of the B. F. Clyde estates near Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. He seems to have had some difficulty in persuading Mr. Presgrave that he did not consider himself "too good" to wield a manure-laden pitchfork, but in the end he was taken on and for two years studied the business of horsemanship, graduating in due course from cleaning stalls and horses to riding in steeplechases all over the State. In between duties he hunted and led a modified social life, modified because he was earning very little money. "What money I had," he writes with engaging candour, "is gone to pay many debts for sowing and cultivating wild oats." Or again, referring to two rich young acquaintances, "I walked over after work was all finished and found them deep in a game of fan-tan. I am sorry I can't afford to play with them for it seems unsociable. But it would be unwise to start on that tack. They are hard at it

now in the smoking-room. What an attractive place the Radnor Hunt [Club] is on a rainy afternoon. I had a mug of fine old draught ale and a good cigar and thought over the possibilities for a rich man to enjoy life. . . . What a pity I haven't just a little—not much—just enough to improve myself a bit and help others to enjoy things."

Half-way through my father's training, Emery Turner, evidently finding the lure of Colorado still strong, left with his wife Mary for Denver. "I am glad on Mother's account," writes my father, "for she was always better in Colorado than in the lower atmosphere of the East. I should like to take a trip out there myself for I remember the wild country with much pleasure."

The pattern was forming! A year later, in 1901, following a bad fall from a horse which nearly killed him, my father departed for Denver to convalesce with his parents. Except for very infrequent business trips, he never again returned to the East.

The first years in Denver after his recovery were difficult. But with a perseverance of which he thought himself incapable, according to his diary, he gradually climbed towards prosperity. Beginning as a clerk in the large department store, Daniels and Fisher, it was not long before he became general manager. His promotion may have been aided by the fact that my Aunt Edith's husband was part owner of the store, but the largest contribution to my father's new-found business energy was undoubtedly his love for Mrs. Florence Hayes Alvord, a beautiful young widow whom he married in 1904. The following year my sister Evelyn was born and in 1909 I made an unpopular arrival, unpopular since I was not the longed-for son. My father was at the time on a business trip in France, recovering from a severe attack of typhoid.

During his climb up the ladder to success, my father does not seem to have lost any of his liberal tendencies which, plus his Irish charm and the kindliness of his nature, made him popular with his subordinates. Among his papers after his death I found a small booklet, bound in tooled leather and hand-painted paper.

## EARLY HISTORY

It contains the thirty-nine signatures of his employees in Daniels and Fisher and a birthday tribute which, while overflowing into sententious prose, nevertheless exemplifies the affection which he was capable of arousing in his associates.

TO DAVID BRYANT TURNER  
WITH BEST WISHES FROM YOUR EMPLOYEES IN THE  
WHOLESALE DEPARTMENT  
DANIELS AND FISHER COMPANY  
JANUARY THE SIXTEENTH  
1905

Many men grasp the good things of Life. Few deserve them. Because you are one of the few in every sense, because you play the game of Life fairly and fearlessly, because you "say to the strong 'I will,' and to the weak 'May I,'" because you know us and understand, because justice sits at your elbow, but most of all because you have compelled our respect, our liking and our loyalty, our names go with this remembrance.

Not long after this touching tribute, my father resigned from Daniels and Fisher to start his own business, the Denver Rock Drill Company. In a short time, due in part no doubt to the busy searchers for El Dorado, in whose lives rock drills must have played an important role, the company became highly successful. In 1912, when I was three years old, my father was at the peak of his business career. We lived in a large mansion on Sherman Street, with an iron grill-work entrance, shuttered windows and much marble work. The rooms were enormous, hung with copies of famous oil paintings and set about with elaborate furniture imported from France, and expensive oriental rugs. We even had a butler. A "mug of fine old ale" and "a good cigar" must have become commonplace to my father, but it was soon apparent that what they represented held for him no spiritual satisfaction.

This dissatisfaction showed itself in the form of an increased physical activity whenever he could cut himself free of the factory's tyranny. He started the Denver polo team and as their

captain led them to a standard of excellence which became nationally famous. He joined the Colorado State Guard, one of Governor Gilpin's organisations, and much to the disgust of my mother took up boxing, gaining the title of Amateur Feather-weight Champion of Colorado. It was a queer, restless period, as though he felt driven to an obscure compensation for what he felt to be wrong with his life.

Every morning he set off in his yellow Peerless, a fantastically ugly example of the horseless vehicle, but at that time greatly admired, and I would stand by the elaborate front door, waving goodbye.

We had a set conversation during which I would ask gleefully, knowing in advance his reply, "Where are you going, Daddy?"

"To make your bread and butter," came the inevitable answer.

For years I took him literally, although it was difficult for me to associate in my mind the large, red-brick factory, covered by climbing roses, with slices of bread and butter; yet when my confusion finally came to an end it was accompanied by a slight disappointment.

None of this could last. The role of big business tycoon, a role far better suited to Emery Turner, was too much in opposition to my father's temperament and his ideals. Furthermore, the daily confinement in an office, the colourless clutter of typewriters, telephones, file baskets and machines must have at times depressed him immeasurably. "Sometimes I felt I couldn't breathe," he told me years afterwards; "I felt I had to do something before I bust." I have a photograph taken at that time, probably for reasons of publicity. It shows him seated at his office desk, staring fixedly at a paper of some kind. His stiff white collar fits him rigidly; his lips are firmly set, his whole attitude is in keeping with the coldly functional equipment of a business environment. But to the left of his desk, well in view, its brass giving off warm gleams of comfortable vulgarity, stands a large cuspidor. I can easily imagine my father, his eyes twinkling with amusement, insisting to a worried photographer that the cuspidor should not be hidden, giving as his reason that such a necessary piece of office furniture must be accorded its due importance.

## EARLY HISTORY

The incident must have given him considerable pleasure, although it may have had the reverse effect on my mother.

In 1913, not long after this photograph showed how successful in worldly terms my father had become, he made the most important decision of his life. With characteristic lack of preliminaries, he sold his house and his business (the Denver Rock Drill Company is still an active organisation, as I have ascertained), and collecting together what capital he could, invested everything in one of the most valuable portions of the Sangre de Cristo Grant—240,000 acres of wilderness, known ever since as the Trinchera Ranch.

Those early promoters must have moved slightly in their graves, the more inquisitive of their ghosts hovering over my father as he completed his final arrangements. A sucker at last? Perhaps he was, to some of them. But to the courageous, or to those possessed of imagination and poetic feeling, my father's decision could only have been a reason for envy.

In the summer of 1913 my mother, my sister Evelyn, our nurse Nana and I climbed into the Peerless and with my father at the wheel we set off, at twenty-five miles an hour, on our journey to the mountains of Sangre de Cristo.

### III

#### D. & R.G.W.

FROM DENVER to Colorado Springs, a distance of about ninety miles, we followed General Palmer's Denver and Rio Grande Railroad (now called the Denver and Rio Grande Western). The trip was not uneventful. Not only did the Peerless sid-swipe a telegraph pole while skidding on the slick, adobe-mud surface of the road, but we were forcibly detained by an angry group of striking miners, who clustered around the car, threatening us with sticks and loud invective. This was, after all, 1913, the year of the great Colorado Coal Strike, a year of which the culmination was to be the notorious Ludlow Massacre, an event that aroused just-minded people throughout the country to protest, until the shameful incident became a national issue.

At the age of four, however, I was less concerned with working conditions and civil liberties than with the immediate safety of my father, who now advanced like a furious bantam rooster on the group leader, his hands folded into tight fists by his sides, his face wearing an expression of menace, shocking to us, since we had never seen him like that before.

"Daddy!" I howled, and buried my face in the smothering violet-scented folds of my mother's mourning-veil.

It must have been my father's obvious intention to fight a battle which could have ended only in mayhem (considering the unequal division of numbers), plus the rationality of his argument, which finally subdued the truculent miners. Smothered as I was, I could not hear what words were spoken, but gradually the shouting died away, and we were finally allowed to continue our journey amid a hostile silence, the capitalistic fumes of the Peerless's exhaust pipe trailing their stench behind us.

A little farther along we stopped again, this time to allow me to be sick. From that day forward, the scent of violets mixed with the reek of gasoline produced the same effect, and even now my stomach is apt to play me false when the old combination assails my nostrils. That moment by the side of the road probably constituted my first real acquaintance with fear.

Our ultimate arrival in Colorado Springs has been lost for ever in a mist of exhaustion. I only remember waking in a bedroom of the Antlers Hotel, from my point of view a thrilling place, where in company with my mother, Evelyn and Nana I was to spend much of the year which followed. My father continued his way to the Trinchera, 250 miles from Colorado Springs, where the monumental task of stocking, fencing and building had already begun. It was a task which might well have discouraged a lesser man. Sagebrush roots lie deep and twisted, and there were hundreds of acres to be cleared without the aid of a bulldozer's battering assault. Miles of barbed-wire fence had to be laid, not only in the valley where the ranch buildings were being constructed, but high into the mountains where ultimately our beef cattle would graze on the sun-cured grass of that second El Dorado.

Yet Bryant Turner threw himself into the struggle without a trace of uncertainty and with a physical energy which is astounding in retrospect. Using a tent as headquarters, he spent long hours riding into the range country, setting fence posts, stretching and stapling the wire, gradually forming a tenuous boundary between wilderness and wilderness. He dug irrigation ditches, cut down aspen trees, which, stripped of their branches, were always used for our corral fences; and in between countless other small tasks, superintended the construction of the ranch buildings, which, like everything else on the place, were built entirely of materials locally produced. A stream of photographs began to arrive for our inspection, showing the half-finished house, its hand-made adobe-mud bricks still bare of their final covering of white stucco; the low, snow-powdered roof (for winter had already come) fringed with sketches of chimneys from my father's enthusiastic pencil. Arrow pointed optimistically to

where there would be an "ice-house," a "water-plant and garage," sleeping-quarters and kitchen. The ranch was taking shape, gradually superimposing itself on that rugged landscape until, completed, it would stand as the transitory symbol of one man's achievement.

Meanwhile, in Colorado Springs, I found life interesting if not as absorbing as when my father was present. When he shot a mountain lion and sent the hide and head to be cured, I accompanied Mr. Manuel, his secretary, to S. Stainsky and Son, the small furrier whose shop was only half a block down Pikes Peak Avenue from the Antlers Hotel, filled with proud excitement. Afterwards, when the lion decorated the big Jacobean chest in our ranch living-room, I would spend long moments stroking the smooth gold of its head, gazing into the fierce yellow depths of its glass eyes, or probing the angry teeth with a curious forefinger.

Mr. Stainsky became a familiar personage in our lives, for it was he who made the family fur coats, fashioned from beaver, all trapped for this single utilitarian purpose on Trinchera. As the youngest, I was not given one of these beautiful coats, or even the hat or mittens which accompanied them. Perhaps my father decided by the time I was large enough to wear such a valuable garment that enough small lives had been sacrificed. In any case, the only fur coat which I could ultimately call mine was an enormously thick one made of coyote skins, too heavy to wear for long and giving one the silhouette of an Eskimo during the height of an Arctic winter. This garment is still in the family and is known simply as the Coat. Mr. Stainsky also made our motoring-rugs, or lap-robcs, as we called them, lining the skin side of the hide with heavy felt and the result was a warmth through which no frost could penetrate. It was again the unfortunate coyote who yielded up his fur to shield us, for as a killer of calves he became legitimate prey, and thus paid dearly for his marauding instincts.

Bryant Turner was not alone in his momentous decision to purchase Trinchera Ranch. I can never be certain of my mother's feelings on the subject—I was barely six years old when she



died, my sister only four years older—but at a time when the pattern of his life was forming most vigorously, with all former worldly success consigned to oblivion, and the future dependent solely on his strength of purpose, there can be no doubt that my Aunt Edith gave him her wholehearted and sympathetic support. In this she was joined by her second husband, Chaloner Schley, and together they formed a partnership with my father, in which he was to be the active, senior member. In this capacity he unconditionally assumed the responsibilities required of him, nor did he at any time fail to carry them out, even though the odds were to become so heavy against him.

In 1913 the Turner family had reassembled, as though drawn back to Colorado by some subconscious wish. Even Tante was then living in Colorado Springs, a gay, beautiful grass widow, determinedly ignoring the Colorado scenery in her quest for what she most desired—a happier and, if possible, a wealthier marriage.

The Schley family, consisting, besides Aunt Edith and Uncle Chai, of three boys, Grant Barney, aged six, Bryant Turner, known as Turner, aged four, and Chaloner Junior, a dark-eyed baby of two, lived in a large three-storey house which they had built in a suburb of Colorado Springs called Broadmoor. The house was heavily influenced by Aunt Edith's stay in England and greatly resembled the large country dwellings of late nineteenth-century English tycoons, who, retiring on the dividends from their industrial success, chose to end their lives as country squires. Both my father and Aunt Edith remained lifelong Anglophiles, but it was in Aunt Edith's house that I received my first idea of another manner of existence, superficially speaking. In spite of the English butler, our Denver house had been conducted by my mother along mixed lines, including elegance suggested by her former years in France together with what can only be called vintage Colorado, 1900.

But in Aunt Edith's house, which soon became ours as well, since with characteristic generosity she welcomed us there unconditionally, we were introduced to English breakfasts, with silver-covered dishes of eggs and kippers on the sideboard. There

was even a "morning room" in which we children spent a large part of our time. The "hired help" were emphatically called servants, although, being Africans, the inherent idea in the word of servility did not exist. They were very much individuals and friends. One of them, Mrs. Glyn, the cook, and her husband Andy remained with the Schleys until none were left alive in Colorado. Mrs. Glyn even cooked for the Turners after my Aunt Edith's death, but I think she only did it out of affection for my father. I both feared and loved Mrs. Glyn; she was a tyrant and a darling, and her home-made bread rose in the pans in the same way as her aproned bosom. She scolded us as she scolded her own children, of whom there were three, and we all played together and stuffed ourselves equally with her superbly cooked food.

The English influence was not so much out of place in Colorado Springs as it might have been. Even before the turn of the century, the town had been known widely as "Little Lunnon," due to the large numbers of Englishmen who had emigrated to Colorado, either to seek their fortunes or to recover in the pure mountain air from tuberculosis. Colorado Springs has always been a health resort, attracting people from all over the world, so that, however unfortunate the contributory causes may be, it has never submitted entirely to insularity.

My Uncle Chal suffered from tuberculosis and lived for only a short time after we came to Colorado Springs. He was a tall, slender man, with a rare sweetness of nature which he passed on to his own sons. He occupied an apartment in one wing of the house and we saw very little of him, but sometimes on those long summer evenings with only the crickets' shrilling to break the quiet, we would suddenly hear his violin sounding from the upper rooms, playing some tender, quavering melody which never failed to move us deeply, although we had no idea then of the severity of his illness.

The summer changed to fall, leaving a residue of sensuous memory which still returns to me at the suggestion of fresh-cut grass, cigar smoke or a blackbird's song. Photographs continued to arrive from Trinchera, including one of a very large man

wearing a cow-puncher outfit, his teeth showing in a wide smile, his belly protruding over the low-hung belt. "Harve Shannon from Texas," wrote my father, "our new foreman."

By now my relationship with the Schley boys had become that of sister and brothers and was to remain so ever afterwards. The accident of my having outlived these boys in no way falsely sentimentalises my feelings for them. In maturity our affection for one another became, if anything, stronger than before. This, may have been partly due to Aunt Edith, who early on decided to "adopt" me.

"I have three sons but not a single daughter," she said one day. "Will you be my daughter?"

I agreed delightedly, and it is interesting to note that my mother too seems to have raised no objection, at least so far as I can remember. Indeed, I have scarcely any recollection of my mother, either at that period or any other time. Yet I know she was there; there are photographs to prove it; also one isolated memory of an evening when she came in to kiss us good night, attired for a fancy-dress ball as the White Rabbit from *Alice in Wonderland*. The ball must have been a very gay affair and characteristic of Colorado's social life—the tailpiece of a carefree, Edwardian existence, where wealth and pleasure lay within easy grasp, and coal strikes and a restive Europe seemed of no lasting importance.

Perhaps it was the rabbit-suiting that makes me recall my mother for that vivid moment, or possibly some absurd remark exchanged with my father who, back in Colorado Springs on a temporary Christmas visit from Trinchera, appeared as Tweedledee, his stomach puffed out by a pillow to the proportions of an enormous melon.

My mother would certainly have laughed, for I am told that she had a quick sense of the absurd. At moments I even imagine that I can remember her laughter, but so tenuous in memory is the division between wishful thinking and reality that it may not be true after all. Yet my mother's personality was arresting, her looks well above average, and I have heard several stories of spontaneous deeds of a kind which indicate that she also possessed

both humour and a strong social conscience. Where did I lose her? Or was it that I never found her?

"Your poor mother," Tante would say to me in later years. "When she was carrying you before you were born she'd have to stop every few minutes to rest. 'Marie,' she'd say to me, 'this child is such a burden!'"

Poor mother! Poor Lolo! as all her friends called her. The experience of her own youth had left her with only a little of the security required to balance a mobile temperament, and her first marriage to a chronic alcoholic did nothing to increase this security. As a kind of spiritual therapy, she wrote a novel around the marriage, a book which was never published but which I have read with deep interest since it helps me to fit together the missing fragments of her personality. She also wrote several short articles and stories, encouraged perhaps by the example of her father, Augustus Hayes, who published consistently in a number of journals and newspapers. Some of these articles appeared in the *Westminster Gazette* during a period when my grandfather was commendably, if unsuccessfully, attempting to explain the Americans to the English.

My mother must also have been aware of the existence in her background of Margaret Fuller, her great-aunt, that ardent feminist and transcendentalist, author of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*; the Zenobia of Hawthorne's *Blythedale Romance*; friend of Emerson, Greeley and Carlyle; and this awareness might well have stimulated any intellectual pretension she possessed.

Christened Florence Rowan Hayes, my mother was born in Shanghai, where Augustus was occupied in laying one of the first railroads in China. His reasons for so doing have never been revealed to me. In later years he was attached to the United States Embassy in London, and at the age of fifteen my mother was left to her own devices in Dinan, France, her own mother obviously wishing to keep well out of sight an attractive, growing daughter who would all too soon become a competitor for the ardent male flattery her nature required. As the photographs in my possession bear witness, Evelyn Hayes had easily persuaded herself that the flattery was justified. I am able to look at Evelyn

as the artist, seated on studio grass, the pastoral effect of a cardboard landscape behind her, her ribboned guitar lying across her lap; Evelyn as the sportswoman, hatted and tweedy; Evelyn on her elegant way to a rendezvous, leaning with an air of false frailty on her ruffled parasol; and, the height of achievement, Evelyn wearing her court presentation dress, eyes modestly cast downwards, the elaborate ostrich plumes trimming her cape acting as a background for the neat proportions of her figure. She was an absurd woman, vain, spoiled and selfish, yet behind that self-conscious beauty there was some of the same almost hysterical forcefulness that had been part of Margaret Fuller's complex personality.

After my grandfather's death Evelyn devoted a few pages of her diary to dramatic grief, although in life she often seems to have considered her husband as merely an irritating necessity. Then, in company with my mother, on whom she now leaned with all the heaviness of which a selfish woman is capable, she returned to the United States, and the diary from then on makes pitiable reading as they wandered from one fashionable watering-place to another, staying in hotels which they could ill afford but determined to maintain a showy front in spite of their dwindling resources. Competition, at least where my grandmother is concerned, seems to have been brisk during that period, although with my mother there appears to be little attempt to quarrel with Evelyn over the division of admirers. Since the fashionable trend was towards Colorado, where prospects appeared to be good in more ways than one, to Colorado they went. Here in Colorado Springs, Evelyn Hayes finally met defeat, for my mother insisted on marrying Mr. Alvord, although in the light of what came after it was the one time when her mother's opposition might have been the lesser of two evils.

Soon afterwards, still a young woman, my grandmother died, and her delicate bones lie beside those of Augustus in the cemetery of Père la Chaise, in Paris.

With a background of this kind, it is understandable why my mother enjoyed her position as one of Denver's leading socialites, as the newspapers often fatuously stated. Yet the gay courage

with which she abandoned this existence suggests a devotion to my father outweighing any personal ambition. The fancy-dress ball may well have been one of the last frivolities belonging to her urban life, for a few months later, when the snow was still deep on the high peaks, we learned that the Trinchera house was now ready for occupancy, and filled with excitement we made preparations to continue our journey. The Peerless had been sold, and in its place my father had bought a Cadillac which, with its powerful engine, he considered better suited for the steep mountain road over La Veta Pass. There was nothing about those early automobiles that even approximated the svelte, fish-tailed monsters of today. Our Cadillac bristled with metal struts; the wind played havoc through the car, unless we fixed into place a number of isinglass curtains through which the passing landscape appeared to be under water, an effect which unhappily increased my tendency to nausea. But we rode high on our seats and the relative slowness of speed cut down the wind's fury. One had a sense of freedom, space and, above all, adventure.

Once out of town, the Cadillac rolled south-east to Pueblo, passing the grey swag heaps of the Guggenheim smelters, where a hot, iron smell tainted the wind; then following for a little time beside the slow current of the Arkansas River. It was this river which seven years later was to burst its banks and inundate Pueblo in a terrible flood, drowning a hundred people and leaving a watermark twelve feet high on the buildings. Beyond Pueblo we crossed the pleasant farmland of Huerfano County, pausing by Huerfano River to eat our lunch.

"Such a gorgeousness!" said my father, using his own special phrase of approval. He filled his mouth with a piece of Mrs. Glyn's chocolate cake, at the same time winking at me. "Eat it up, little sister."

He used this diminutive more to distinguish me from my sister Evelyn than for sentiment's sake. As a rule he called me butcher-bird or pie-faced mutt, both of which I willingly accepted for their affectionate overtones, if not for their, literal meaning.

On the other side of the little town of Walsenberg, our last touch with an uncertain civilisation, my father's obvious joy began to affect us, and we bounced on the high, hard seat, shouting our pleasure. The road began to climb through foothills, still scarred by the old wounds of placer mines. We passed the turn-off to Ludlow and my father told us how only the previous September the miners, refused their legitimate demands for an eight-hour day, a ten per cent. wage increase, the right to belong to the United Mineworkers of America, and the right to trade in other than company stores, had laid down tools for a long strike that was even now in process. They lived, he said, in a tent colony—miners, a few officials, sympathisers and union organisers, in all about 8,000 people—fighting frequently against the State Guard who had been sent by the orders of the Governor to impose martial law. A few strikers had already been killed, but it was not until April 20, 1914, only a few weeks after we had passed that way, that the "Massacre" took place. Tents were set on fire, and in the holocaust eleven children and two women were burned to death. It was a dark moment in Labour history, although it had its positive results, for the miners' demands were finally recognised.

I understood, at five, little of what my father was saying, but some of the frightening import of his words must have taken effect, for during all subsequent trips, for years to come, I never passed the Ludlow turn-off without a tremor of fear.

The air was growing colder and on both sides of the road we could see drifts of snow lying in the blond grasses. The gradient became steeper, the heavy timber climbing thickly in precise ranks high out of our line of vision; the stripped delicacy of mountain larch and aspen lay like grey smoke against the heavy green of the fir trees. We passed a cabin, waving to the Mexican occupants who emerged briefly to stare. Below in the valley we had seen an occasional teamster or a rider, but that had been several hours ago and now, except for the Mexican cabin, we were alone in our wilderness. The Cadillac's engine laboured in the silence, heavy tyres slipping a little on the mud. My father pointed upwards to where the road climbed steeply, twisting and

turning against the sheer side of the great ridge. It was La Veta Pass! These were the Sangre de Cristo mountains! Now our wheels were following the same path those early explorers had used, where pack-train and supply-wagon had climbed slowly, cutting their way through the resisting trees, their only guide the traces of an old Ute Indian hunting trail. And later General Palmer had laid his first D. & R.G. tracks along this same highway, the little narrow-gauge engine winding busily upwards, frightening the deer, the elk and the bear into desperate flight. It used to be said of these engines that they could "turn on the brim of a sombrero."

Then came the depression of the 1870s, and the railroad had been temporarily abandoned. When it was rebuilt, a new site was chosen to the left and higher up, some of the precipitous climb having been eliminated by tunnels blasted through the very heart of the mountain. This railroad was the one commercial link between Trinchera and the outside world. We seldom used it on our journeys down to the ranch, and perhaps that is one of the reasons it had a special magical quality for me on the occasions when I travelled alone. It was a night trip and I would board the train in Colorado Springs to find the Pullman berths already made up, the coloured porter, who knew us all, waiting to see that I got into bed at once, promising to call me next morning at six o'clock when the train reached Fort Garland, where someone from the ranch would be waiting.

"Yessuh, Mr. Turner, I'll take care of her, you bet."

And later, giving my hard pillow a spank, laying an extra blanket on the foot of the berth ("Mighty cold in them old mountains"), he would say, "I'll have to look after you, good, won't I? You Old Man Turner's little girl."

As he was to this man, so my father was known to all the porters from Denver to Chicago as "Old Man Turner," the adjective denoting a collective affection. The porters were the only Negroes I knew in my childhood, for there were very few living in Colorado; but such was their kindness to me, such the degree of security they inspired in me, that I was early on conditioned in the belief that Negroes in general are very special human beings.



I have maintained this belief all my life, although some of the sentimental dross has been removed from my thinking.

I never failed to wake when the little train began the steep ascent over La Veta Pass, as though there were some prearranged signal between the mountains and me. I would lie still, listening to the straining chuff-chuff of the engine, watching the green serge curtains of my berth slowly swaying, hearing but not heeding the scattered explosion of snores from my fellow-passengers. (There was seldom more than one Pullman car attached to the train in those days, and only a handful of travelers.) Such a mounting feeling of excitement and love would sweep over me that I could not sleep but would turn on my side, pushing up the metal blind over the window to watch for a long time the slow, thrilling passage of those shadowed hillsides and black gorges. On moonlit nights the beauty would be overwhelming and I would stare out for a long time, absorbed by the shifting patterns of white light and shadow, or by the huge brilliance of the stars. I would finally sleep exhaustedly, not stirring until I felt the porter's hand on my shoulder, urging me gently to wakefulness.

"Come on, honey, time to get up now. Better shake a leg."

Part of the charm of these trips lay in the proportion of danger, slight though it might have been, that was attached to them. More than once an end car came uncoupled from the rest of the train, speeding backward to destruction unless the brakeman could stop it in time. On one of these occasions my father was aboard, and feeling the increasing speed of the heavy car he burst through the curtains of his berth, pulled frantically at the emergency cord and shouted to everyone to jump. The car was safely cleared before it came to a halt far down the grade, but the passengers, as my father said ruefully, "were picking cinders from our feet for weeks afterwards."

Road travel also had its danger and on this, our very first voyage, my father glanced a little worriedly at the sky, which had become suddenly overcast. "Snow-clouds," he said. The warmth of that early spring day had indeed left the air, and

Evelyn and I burrowed down under the coyote-skin rug. There were still ninety miles to go.

Just before we began the steepest portion of the climb my father stopped the car beside a spring that gushed out from the hillside. We each filled a cup from the bright fountain and as we drank he said, "Now we're nearly home. When we reach the top of the Pass, we reach Trinchera's boundary line."

Something in his voice impressed me and I strained by eyes to see beyond the convolutions of the ranges, trying to visualise the physical aspect of a boundary line. Was it a fence or a line of trees?

My father pointed to the enormous spine of mountains rising up behind the spring, where a single peak, higher than the others within our range of vision, stabbed the sky, its grey, shale-covered slopes joining the snow-banks far above timber-line.

"Old Baldy," he said. "And farther along behind that shoulder of mountains is Mount Blanca, part of our home range. These are the mountains the Indians thought were magic mountains." As we stared, our heads back, mouths hanging open in wondering interest—because somehow the mention of Indians had brought these awesome heights closer to our childish understanding—he added softly, "The Indians knew more about this country than we shall ever know."

He drained the last of his spring water and shook out the cup.

"You can't find water like that anywhere in the world."

And as I remember it, I think he was right. The water was compounded of mountain air, sun and snow; it was like drinking crystal. Never, on any of our subsequent trips to Trinchera, did we fail to stop for that ceremony by the wayside. My father always made the same remark about the water and we always shared his enthusiasm, sipping our mountain nectar and staring up at Baldy's great slopes. If there was no actual fence, pile of stones or monument to mark the ranch boundary, this small ritual and the mountain peak were enough to satisfy my questions. Here began Trinchera.

I found out years later that not far from where we stopped, a monument had actually been constructed, one of four to mark

the demarcation lines of the Sangre de Cristo Grant. As was customary with the Mexican Government in those days, Charles Beaubien, the grantee, had been conducted by the demarcation judge, Miguel Vigil, to each of the four corners of the grant where monuments were raised and, as a sign of the land's transfer, shovelfuls of soil tossed over Beaubien's head, which process being enacted four times, must have made him thoroughly aware of ownership.

The climb to the top was without casualty, although we had a bad moment on meeting a lumber wagon round an especially sharp bend in the road, where the cliff-side fell away sheer on one side and on the other rose up without compromise to a rocky skyline. The lumberman managed to control his frightened horses until we had backed laboriously to a cut-out to allow him room to pass. The incident entertained my sister and me considerably, making us forget our weariness. It was getting dark and large snowflakes began to fall. Soon we stopped again, this time to fit on the isinglass curtains, a procedure which seemed to take a very long time. I was growing sleepy now, but I heard my father say, "I may have to put on the chains."

This he did, a few miles farther along, for the snow had thickened to the proportions of a small blizzard and soon, even with the chains on our tyres, we skidded and stuck fast in a drift. I had been dozing but awoke at the sound of the Cadillac's frustrated roar, hearing the wheels churning the snow as the chains slipped and caught and slipped again. I slept once more, later half-waking to see the red beam of a storm-lantern, hear voices and the snorting of a horse. I found out afterwards that my father had walked a mile and a half to the lumber camp for help and that we were eventually pulled from our snow-drift by a team of horses.

It must have been very late at night when we turned into the valley below Trinchera Peak where the lonely, welcoming lights of our new house awaited us. My father carried me, drowned in sleep, to my bed. I awoke briefly aware of the sound of a wood fire crackling, and the strange, sickly odour of kerosene. I sat up for a minute and looked towards the glowing, friendly eye

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of the Franklin stove at the end of my room, the same kind of stove with its curving pipe that had warmed the dance hall in those far-off days in Montezuma. Sleep claimed me again, but just before I lost consciousness I experienced briefly the incalculable, exquisite emotion that remains the core of one's feelings throughout existence. I knew at that moment that I had finally come home.

## IV

### FORT GARLAND

I HAVE never discovered why the ranch was called Trinchera, or, as it is spelled on the old maps, Trianchera and Trenchera. The meaning of this word in Spanish is trench, gully, ditch or entrenchment, none of which appears to have much association with the physical structure of the land, unless it refers to the declivity of our home-valley. One can make surmises, guess at some "last-ditch" struggle between Indian and pioneer, or, even more fanciful, pretend that those early settlers were "entrenching" themselves in glorious solitude against the intrusion of the outside world. But since we know the reverse to be true, there is not much point in pursuing this theory. My father told us the meaning of the word was fortress, which may have been a loose translation. My own feeling is simply one of pleasure that the language involved was Spanish. It would be difficult to find the romantic overtones of a name like Gully.

TRINCHERA RANCH, said the wide, red sign over our gates, with, on either side of the name, D. B. Turner and Mrs. C. B. Schley. Above, suitably decorative against the mountains and sky, curved the sweeping horns of a Texas steer. During the first few of our sixteen years on Trinchera there was still a handful of these fierce, longhorn cattle, the descendants of herds that had originally belonged to the Spanish settlers. They wandered over the range like wild things and I remember the day when I met one during a solitary excursion into the piñon hills. We stared at one another, caught in a mutual static moment of surprise until, released by an explosion of fear, I shot away through the sagebrush like a terrified rabbit, running until my heart pounded in my throat and my ribs ached. It was the first and last time I

ever encountered a longhorn, for their race, unclaimed and therefore prey to any careless rifle, soon died out and our own Herefords took their place.

The ranch houses lay at the head of a narrow valley five miles off the highway, clustered together under a grove of huge and ancient cottonwood trees, and reached by means of a road that had been literally hacked out of the thick sagebrush. Efforts were made from year to year to keep this road in repair, but it was a constant struggle against erosion by cloudburst or snow and I never remember it, as being anything but rough. The valley itself was at an elevation of over 8,000 feet, and the road climbed even higher through foothills covered with piñon trees, before arriving at a point where the green and gold sweep of meadowland, wide streams and woods greeted our eyes. At the head of the valley stood Trinchera Peak; opposite the Peak sparkled a small reservoir, and beyond stretched the long, bare mesa, called Snake Mountain. On every side the mountains rose up protectively, each with its series of foothills, and the road followed these, proceeding, according to the convolutions of the landscape, in a series of small hills and descents which we referred to as "thank-you-ma'ns." It was dangerous to attempt these irregularities in the earth's surface at more than a speed of fifteen miles an hour, but we often tried. The resulting damage to fractured springs and our skulls as they hit the roof scarcely seemed to make the attempt worth while, at least according to our elders.

Looking west from the house, we could watch the ever-changing pattern of light and shade, the lovely proclamation of dawn or sunset coloration, that swept across the great shapes of Mount Blanca and Baldy Peaks, standing over 14,000 feet high. The San Luis Valley had once been the bed of an inland sea, and these mountains, volcanic in formation, rose without foothills straight up from its flat surface. The Ute Indians were justified in calling them the mountains of the gods and surrounding them with superstition, for as late as 1811 smoke had been reported rising from their fissures, indicating the possibility of a recent earthquake.

Where superstition ended, scientific interest began and we

frequently received letters from geologists or anthropologists asking for information. Some of these men came to visit us, one of them being Henry Fairfield Osborn, of the New York Zoological Society. My father informed me that Mr. Osborn was planning to "catch a duck-billed platypus" on Mount Blanca. I was not certain whether or not to believe him, especially when he explained to me the physical attributes of this extraordinary creature, but after climbing Mount Blanca myself, the presence there of any survivor from the prehistoric age seemed within the realm of possibility.

The visit took place some years later than the platypus incident and covered two days; I remember it as an awesome experience. We left our horses at timber-line and stumbled up through the snow-covered boulders to look into the still, black depths of a crater lake. Although the month was August, our breath froze in the cold air, and we lit a fire to warm ourselves. Below, the country spread out for miles in a stunning vagary of colour and design and we gazed until our eyes watered, knowing that we were seeing Colorado and New Mexico at the same time. The immensity of the scene reduced speech to triviality, and we stared in silence, feeling suspended above time and history. Perhaps it was a sense of our own mortality that forced us after a little while into movement and sound as though we sought for something with which we might comfortably identify ourselves. We climbed among the boulders, tossed small stones into the water, threw snowballs, but gradually the persistent hostility of the grey rocks, the sinister darkness of the lake drove us back to the fire's welcoming circle. It was not difficult at that moment to remember the Indians' superstitions. These were not friendly mountains and we were glad to descend finally from their chilly heights, leaving them to the silent occupation of their gods, or to time's slow corrosion. As long as we were to live, and after, their beauty was best observed from afar.

Unlike our small home-valley, which was richly endowed with springs and streams, fed by the snow-banks of Trinchera Peak, San Luis had been developed by a huge system of irrigation to become one of the most fertile portions of Colorado. It was

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probably of this valley that my grandfather had been thinking when he made his excursion to Cortez. Fields of corn, sweet sorghum, oats, beets, barley, peas, potarocs and Pinto beans fitted against one another, their careful squares connected by the shining lines of irrigation ditches. COSTILLA COUNTY, a large sign by the roadside informed us, HOME OF PIGS, PEAS AND PROSPERITY.

Nine miles from our house, where the sagebrush of cattle country ended and the farmland of San Luis began, sprawled Fort Garland, so christened in the year of its construction by a certain Brigadier-General J. Garland. Although its history until 1883, when it was moved to Fort Lewis (the same Fort Lewis where Aunt Edith and Tante attended the garrison dances), was full of hair-raising incidents, when we knew it Fort Garland was, and probably still is a lazy hamlet with a population of about 250. There was a single main street, dusty and dangerous with pot-holes. The principal building was the Hoagland Brothers' General Store where we did our shopping; the main focus of social gathering, the station, where every night the Mexicans assembled to watch for the evening train, the scarlet buds of their cigarettes blooming and dying through the darkness. The post office, a small shack with fly-specked windows, was presided over by Mr. Matthews, who as long as I knew him had only one lens in his glasses. The original buildings of the Fort were falling into decay and no one seemed interested in the fact that Kit Carson, the famous trapper and scout, had commanded the Fort for two years, from 1866 to 1867.

We already know from reading Dr. M'Clellan's letter written in 1868 that "death from natural causes (i.e. disease)" was far less apt to occur than from more esoteric sources, and the story of the Espinoza brothers bears this out.

The Fort was built as a "threatening gesture" to the Indians, who seemed to have been making a nuisance of themselves by attempting to defend their hunting-grounds against the white intruders. One of their bloodiest defeats took place at Wagon Wheel Gap, a wide draw, not far from Fort Garland, which my father would point out to us each time we passed. But if Fort



Garland was successful in quelling the Indians, it had less success with the Espinoza brothers. This extraordinary pair had been, they said, inspired by a dream in which the Virgin Mary gave them leave to follow their desires without stricture. Such uncensured behaviour resulted in a series of robberies and killings that continued until the brothers were able to report to the Virgin Mary—presumably in a subsequent dream—that thirty-two murders could now be credited to them. The authorities of Fort Garland were less indulgent and a reward was offered for the capture of the Espinozas, dead or alive. It was a friend of Kit Carson, another scout named Thomas Tobin, who finally caught up with one of the brothers while a posse of miners annihilated the other after an unpleasant scrimmage in Ute Pass.

After shooting his Espinoza, Tobin cut off the head of this misguided man, and placing it in a sack, carried it back thoughtfully to Fort Garland where a dance was in progress. Showing a decided flair for drama, Tobin entered the ballroom and bounced the head out on to the floor where it rolled its hideous passage between the feet of the dancers. No report is made of their reactions, but one is safe in assuming that the head was not welcome.

There is a postscript to this horrid incident, no less agitating to a frail stomach. Among the crowd of dancers was a doctor, unnamed, who managed to steal the head, now more or less decently floating in a jar of alcohol, and set out with it for Pueblo where he planned to use it for obscure medical devices of his own. Tobin, however, pursued him and just outside Walsenberg recovered his trophy, breaking the jar during the ensuing tussle. In Walsenberg, Tobin hunted for more alcohol in which to pickle the head, but discovered a situation which had "never been known before in the history of the town." Evidently all hard spirits in the neighbourhood had been required for pickling in another sense, for there was not a drop of alcohol to be found. Tobin found himself forced to wait until the next trainload of "strong waters" arrived from Denver before placing the remnants of the unhappy Espinoza in their final liquid tomb.

One feels that by this time one brother at least had paid in full his debt to society.

When we arrived to live on Trinchera, Fort Garland had sunk into an apathy from which it seldom shook itself except on days when there was a cattle shipment from our ranch, or a consignment of vegetables destined for one of the larger towns had to be loaded into the waiting box-cars. This happened infrequently, however, for not only were our beef cattle usually shipped from a point higher in the mountains where the D. & R.G. tracks ran parallel with the summer range, but the San Luis farmers used for their purposes the town of Alamosa, thirty-odd miles down the valley, a settlement which in terms of size and urbanity made Fort Garland seem by comparison a dried-up mud puddle. There was a cement side-walk running down Alamosa's main street, two general stores and, in later years, a movie theatre, and probably few of the inhabitants remembered that only a short time before, in line with the early settlers' desires, lynching Mexicans had been a usual method of asserting authority. We seldom visited Alamosa, but we did sometimes drive to Blanca, the only other settlement in the valley, a hamlet very like Fort Garland but with even less character. The attraction for us in Blanca was its ice-cream cones, unavailable in Fort Garland. Although both our cook and Mrs. Glyn made excellent ice-cream every Sunday in large freezers, the kind with metal dashers which we were sometimes permitted to lick, there was a special flavour to those Blanca ice-creams. It may have been the frequent presence of dead flies which we used to find tucked away in the very bottom of the cone.

In 1927 a colony of Japanese settled in the San Luis Valley and began to raise lettuce at such a rate that the local farmers grumbled enviously, watching in hostile silence as the packed crates were stacked high in the freight yard. The Japanese paid no attention to their audience but worked busily, talking among themselves. If we happened to be standing near Hoagland's Store when one of their trucks bounced by, they would grin and wave to us and we would wave back, enjoying their friendly saffron-coloured faces.

But it was mainly from us, our visitors and our activities that

## FORT GARLAND

Fort Garland derived a certain excitement. On one occasion my father had two car-loads of unbroken range horses shipped in from Montana, and their arrival created an atmosphere amounting to general holiday as what appeared to be the whole town gathered by the tracks to watch the unloading. Dogs barked, men shouted, the boards of the freight car splintered noisily under plunging hooves as the spirited horses milled around, more afraid of the outer world and the shouting than they were of their narrow confinement. At last, erupting like champagne from a bottle, they poured out into the road, scattering us to all sides as they galloped expectantly towards freedom. But our riders pursued them with barking calls of "hi-hi-hi," directing the wild rush, for the horses were destined to be broken in as cow-ponies, and this was their last independent flight as a herd.

The Mexicans particularly found us a source of interest, even of comedy, and being less inhibited than the American inhabitants, would collect to stare happily whenever we appeared in town. We must, indeed, have appeared strange to them, with our utilitarian "western" dress, our manners, our cars and our suggestion of a distant world which they would never see. Their uninhibited gaze would often make us shy and we children sought to defend ourselves by returning haughty glances of our own, although on the whole I think we rather liked each other.

Imputations of spinelessness, dishonesty and general inferiority simply because they were Mexicans undoubtedly found their way to our young ears, although without any marked effect. Some of the criticism may have been true, since the early Americans had succeeded in uprooting the Mexican population to a degree which left little room for initiative, unless, like the Espinoza brothers, they resorted to violence. In a way they were men without a country.

The ones we knew best, among whom we made good friends, were of course those who worked on the ranch. But the others, as well, belonged so much to the world we loved that had they disappeared, a valued portion of our personal landscape would have been erased. Seen by the unpleasant light of adult experience, the Mexicans lived, and probably still live, in surroundings

that exemplified only too plainly their extreme poverty. However, as a child, the dark earth-floored adobe houses, the tar-roofed shacks, or the derelict cabooses and freight cars inhabited by railway workers, all had for me a peculiar fascination. In particular, I admired the freight cars, those houses on wheels with their neat, curtained windows cut through the sides, the gourd-hung vines growing over red-painted boards, the steps leading up to the door. I would sidle across the dusty road from the station, where someone from the ranch would be sending off a freight parcel, to watch the naked-bottomed babies playing about under the steps, their mother, dressed in a long, red skirt and a pink blouse, sitting above them, another infant lying carelessly across her widespread legs.

"Como esta usted?" Her teeth were very white.

"Bueno," I would reply shyly.

"Bueno, bueno!"

At the sound of her laughter an old woman came to peer out of the door, her head covered in a dark rebozo, her face like a walnut shell.

"Ah, esta muchacha Americana!"

Interest began to centre upon me; the children stopped their playing, dogs their scratching. Everyone stared with candid enjoyment, talking and giggling among themselves, until defeated by lack of a communal language (for I knew scarcely any Spanish) and my own embarrassment I would retreat to the stale, tobacco-stinking air of the station waiting-room, where the telegraph apparatus clicked out its messages and the same Montgomery Ward calendar hung year after year on the dirty walls. A little later, I would see the old woman shuffle past me in her long, black dress, perhaps on her way to the small Mexican chapel to light a candle.

"Adios," she called, raisin-like eyes squinting at me from her lined face.

Sometimes, driving home, we would pass a team of railroad workers sailing down the glinting tracks on a hand car, stripped to the waist, muscles standing up on their brown backs as they worked the lever back and forth. We would shout greetings to

one another, on our side clouded with a faint envy, for we agreed how fine a thing it would be, to pump the lever of the hand car like the Mexicans, singing as we went.

Twice a week we drove the nine miles into Fort Garland to fetch supplies and the mail. Although most of our food was home-grown—even the wheat for our bread being ground into flour at a mill a few miles south of Fort Garland—the few tinned goods we consumed, as well as candy, ropes, smaller items of farm equipment, fishing tackle, ammunition, seeds, pencils and paper, a dozen or more items, all were purchased at Hoagland Brothers' General Store. This store with its wonderful medley of smells—boot leather, the acid smell of new-dyed overalls, pepper, chocolate, kerosene, the dusty odour of sacking, the tang of patent medicines and the clinging, ubiquitous scent of old tobacco smoke—seemed to me a place of enchantment. Having survived the scrutiny of any porch loungers, we children would enter the richly perfumed interior of the store, heading greedily for the counter where hard candy was dispensed from large jars, or where we could look down into the sloping, glass-covered case displaying candy bars, pondering long and pleasurably in our choice between "Baby Ruths," "Oh Henrys" or a larger variety of Hershey bars, those succulent chocolate slabs that, with or without nuts, one could dissect into smaller slabs, thereby spinning out one's enjoyment.

On lifting my eyes from this gluttonous study, I would automatically look at the large sign on the wall directly in front of me, "PLEASE DO NOT SPIT ON THE FLOOR." Even as a small child I found a discrepancy between this sign and the activities of the porch loungers who on cold days collected round the fat-bellied stove in the centre of the store, their low-voiced conversation punctuated from time to time by the sound of a rigorously cleared throat followed by the sharp hiss of saliva drying on the stove's hot sides. Eventually I concluded that this method of expectoration saved the Hoaglands from cleaning the boards and was therefore permitted. In any case Shorty Hoagland himself had told me that he could spit "clear across the road on a windy day," a boast which he had never had the time to prove

to me but which I fervently believed for a number of years.

Shorty was the elder of the two Hoaglands, a small man with bald head, bright, blue eyes and drooping tobacco-stained moustache. His brother was a quiet man and probably, as I suspect on looking back, the more businesslike of the two. But my recollection of him is dimmed by the years, apart from remembering his generosity in doling out handfuls of "red hots," those small sweets that melted on the tongue like fire and cinnamon and reminded me, for some obscure reason, of the Mexican woman sitting on the steps of the freight-car home, her baby sprawled across the red cotton covering of her knees.

Shorty Hoagland, however, had no difficulty in imprinting his volatile personality on all of us. He was a deputy sheriff and wore a badge pinned to his grey flannel shirt, but this close association with the law in no way prevented him from a constant violation of the truth. His falsehoods were so outrageous that they passed beyond simple lying into the realm of creative fantasy, and he could hold us enthralled by his stories of two-headed coyotes and calves born with paws like a bear. Before we got to know him well he managed to sell my father (sight unseen, a mistake which was never repeated) a horse whose virtues as a lady's saddle-horse he so extolled that my father did not hesitate to make the purchase. The horse's name was Skeeter and while being an equable, attractive chestnut gelding it was soon discovered that he was partially blind, wind-broken and permanently lame in one leg. On being confronted with these facts, Shorty merely looked hurt and denied all knowledge of any fault.

"Just can't understand it," he said. "Why that Skeeter is one of the best ponies I ever owned. Clever too; why he's so clever he's pretty near human. You know what I seen him do one day—and I was standing as close as I am to you now—why that cayuse done took a stick in his teeth and he druv the other horses right out of the corral to the pasture, then he come back and he closed the gate with his nose. Human he is, human."

At other times, Shorty could be grouchily taciturn or given to sudden passing fits of anger. I have seen him drop the package he was tying up, seize his rifle and rush out to the porch, there to

fire wildly across the road into a colony of prairie-dogs, the small, yellow gopher-like animals, whose burrows are to be found everywhere in the sagebrush country.

"Durn little varmints," he'd say, re-entering the store to continue whatever he had been doing. "They'll dig so far that one day they'll bring the whole shootin'-match," gesturing around the store, "down on our heads."

If he were not too busy he would come to see us off, when loaded with supplies and the week's mail in its canvas, leather-bound bag, we would set off for home. Looking back through the cloud of dust thrown up by our wheels, we would see him standing on the porch waving to us, his gesture the final satisfaction of a completely satisfying few hours.

Sometimes on the way home we would be overtaken by a cloudburst, a torrential unloading of the skies that in a few minutes had flooded the roads and brimmed the streams beyond their borders. In just as short a time the rain would stop, the sun burned down and we would have the excitement of wondering whether this time we would get stuck while crossing Trinchera Creek. There was a bridge, but it seemed always to be in a state of disrepair and was considered unsafe for the weight of the car.

Four miles down the road with the bridge in sight, whoever was driving would make preparations for the crossing, changing gear and aiming the car at the opposite bank while we sat tensely on the edge of our seats. "Hold on!" came the shout and we plunged down, the bank straight at the stream. But the wheels caught and spun in the clutch of thick adobe mud, spun and spun while the engine roared helplessly. No use; we were stuck, and would have to wait until help could be brought in the shape of a team of horses to pull us out.

We would tumble from the car to chase swallowtail butterflies along the bank, or pick the scarlet flowers of Indian paintbrush. The air smelled deliciously of damp sagebrush and we could feel our clothes drying against our backs. There was no hurry, there was nowhere we would rather be. The sun shone hotter and over Trinchera Peak the final thunderclouds melted into the bright translucence of a summer sky.

## V

### HIGH POCKETS AND OTHERS

THE FIRST year of our life on Trinchera was spent without the companionship of my Schley cousins. Somewhere between the time of arrival during the spring of 1914 and the first snows of fall, Uncle Chal had slipped out of existence as quietly as he had lived. My sister Evelyn and I were merely told that it would be a little time still before Aunt Edith's house would be occupied and, absorbed as we were in our new environment, the postponement scarcely made any impression. From the time we got up in the morning, roused by the drone of the milk separator, or the querulous murmur and squawk of grey geese beneath our window, until we fell asleep to a haunting chorus of coyote voices in the nearby foothills, we lived with an intensity of enjoyment that bordered on ecstasy. The finishing touches to the house had been made, the roof painted red, the windows a vivid blue—blue because the Devil hates the colour, the Mexicans explained to us—and the whitewashed walls caught the sunlight in a bright welcome.

Those first years we had no electricity, and the windows glowed at night from the soft light of kerosene lamps, but later on a little monster called a Delco was installed in the garage, the put-put-put of its engine generating a truculent reminder of civilisation against the mountains' huge indifference. Water was brought in from a spring through reluctant pipes which alternately burst or dried up. Nevertheless, our "modern" plumbing was a source of admiration to visiting ranchers, whose children would use the lavatory with a frequency which rose not so much from necessity, as from a fascinated desire to pull the chain. With a lavishness scarcely appropriate, four bathrooms had been installed, the



water being heated by a wood-burning boiler. Each bedroom had its poorly Franklin stove and the long living-room-cum-dining-room was heated at either end by large fire-places in which we burned piñon logs, so quick to burst into flames that they hardly needed the help of paper or kindling.

The house was built Mexican-style, four-walled and single-storied with a patio in the middle, and furnished with remnants from our Denver mansion, to which had been added large quantities of flowered chintz ruffles, evidently my mother's idea of utilitarian material. In addition there were in the living-room stuffed animal heads hung about, a buffalo over one fire-place, an elk's wide antlers over the other, in between, antelope and deer, while slung across a big Jacobean chest was the mountain lion hide and head, glass eyes reflecting the fire's light. The carpets were fussily elegant, flower patterned on a green background, and the entire effect must have resembled a cross between Graustark and an English country cottage. Indeed, looking back, I suspect that at that time the only room which had been furnished in a manner conceivably suitable to the wild environment was my father's study. Here the simplicity of leather armchairs and a wide couch covered by a blue and red Mexican serape, Navajo rugs on the floor and the plain functional look of his big desk combined to make an atmosphere which I found peculiarly attractive. Perhaps it was partly because here too were most of our books, lining three walls, and I spent many rainy afternoons buried in both the leather armchair and my reading, the long reverberations of thunder in the canyons rolling unheeded about my ears.

Any tendency, however, to question my mother's taste in interior decoration has developed in retrospect and through the more captious eyes of adult experience, criticism paradoxically having its definite limitations. As a child, I accepted everything about the house as being faultless, although I did find it difficult to come to terms with Gainsborough's "Blue Boy," a large reproduction of which hung over the head of my bed. Something about this youth's delicate features incited in me a certain coarseness of behaviour and I would stick my tongue out at him in

derision, varying this senselessness by thumbing my nose, an action which gave me obscure pleasure, although I was not certain what it meant.

On the other hand, Rosa Bonheur's "Horse Fair," which hung on the wall above my dressing-table, delighted me and I would study the jumble of fiery eyes, flaring nostrils, large rumps, manes and tails, with an excitement which might have been of interest to a Freudian, if not to Rosa Bonheur, who would have perhaps expected a more orthodox appreciation of her art. But my feeling about horses at that period and for some years to come steered an erratic course between a Yahoo-like adoration and the practical assessment of their value as a stock-in-trade.

Another indication of my mother's hesitation in casting her lot wholeheartedly with the more primitive side of ranch life was the existence of a butler's pantry with swinging doors. This was obviously a redundancy, for not only did we no longer have a butler, but the kitchen with its enormous iron cook stove, its homely warmth and clatter, where successions of Mexican or Swedish "help" squabbled and made it up, cooked, drank and sang, so dominated our house that there could have been little use for the pantry save as a passage between one room and another. "Fine" china was kept there, but after a time even this found its way inevitably to the kitchen.

Out of doors, the ranch was growing as a unit, the stables and outhouses gradually taking shape, the corrals springing up, their stripped, satiny poles smelling deliciously of fresh sap. On one side of the garage a large ice-house had been constructed, the ice being cut from our lake during the winter and brought in huge chunks by sledge to the house, where it was stored under six feet of sawdust. We would sometimes, on a hot day, enter the ice-house, although it was strictly against orders, surreptitiously sliding back the bolt of the pinewood door, the unpeeled bark rough against our fingers, feeling the cold air rush to meet us. Once inside with the door shut, we would sit in the chilly darkness, the clean scent of sawdust in our nostrils, conspiratorial and happy, until from without would come an angry call and we

would leave our refuge guiltily, emerging with blinking eyes into the bright sunlight.

Backed up against the ice-house on the opposite side of the garage was the meat-house where whole sides of beef, pork and lamb were hung after a butchering.

Downhill from the house the woodshed, that most important building, sheltered neatly stacked logs of all lengths, and the whining note of the saw became to me as familiarly insistent as a bluebottle fly. Cow barn, machine shed, chicken house, vegetable cellar, one by one gave place to the red-painted stables which were the pride of all of us, although chiefly my father's. They had been built on a slight rise a few hundred yards from the house and were reached by a lane that crossed Trinchera Creek over a hollow-sounding plank bridge.

To the right of the woodshed the stream that had its source in the small spring from which we piped our water wound through a thick wood, some of which had been cleared to make what we called the sheep pasture, and here my father had planted a vegetable garden where Evelyn and I stuffed ourselves greedily, digging up the new, tender lettuce, radishes and carrots with a careless stick. We would cut the heart from turnups, and fill our mouths with the crisp, white meat, washing it down with draughts of water from the stream, then, replete, we would lie on the bank, looking up dreamily at the sky until our digestion had reached a point where we considered it safe to pay a visit to Juan Roybal. Setting off through the thickets, we kept a careful watch for poison ivy and the presence of two curly-horned rams who occupied the pasture in majestic solitude until the breeding season came round.

Juan—or John, as he liked to be called—lived with his wife and children in a tar-roofed shack which had been built for him at the edge of the sheep-pasture woods. There was a plank floor, the inevitable Franklin stove in the middle of the main room, two smaller rooms furnished with iron bedsteads, two or three straight wooden chairs, a rocker, a table and a green-painted cupboard. Washing was done in a tin basin outside the door and children and chickens investigated the refuse pile together for

possible treasure. The place was neither clean nor attractive, but from my point of view it possessed the usual charm of these doubtful habitations. Perhaps it was their smallness which appealed to me, the same reason which caused me, when our piano arrived from Denver, to set up house in its packing-case like a cat which finds a box only just suitable to its proportions. John's shack had further attractions for me in the strings of red peppers which dripped from the ceiling and the sheets of "funny" papers and bright advertisements with which he had papered the walls.

As we approached, he came to the door to meet us, his ugly face split by a wide smile that showed his prominent tobacco-stained teeth and brown gums to their full disadvantage. Two or three of his many children peered out from behind his legs and Mrs. Roybal hung self-effacingly in the background.

"Bueno, que tal?"

"Bueno, bueno."

Then, impatient with the delay, "John, can we cut brush with you today? John, one of the hens has hidden her nest in the woods behind the machine shed. Will you help us find it? Do you know, John, there was a skunk by the spring last night, I could still smell it this morning."

To all our demands and excited chatter, John would reply in halting English, his willingness to comply as innocent as our own exploitation of him. He was always kind, never impatient and there was nothing about his relationship with us in the least ingratiating or submissive. His position on the ranch was a nebulous one, consisting of a variety of jobs for which my father maintained he was wholly reliable. Perhaps if he had not been a Mexican and therefore subject to contempt from the other employees, he might have occupied a more responsible place in the little hierarchy, but, as it was, all kinds of tasks fell to his lot which by rights should have been the work of the chore-boy, Chick, for he milked the cows, fed the chickens, kept the garden and fetched our ponies from the field. Yet there was one occupation with which John alone could be associated—that of wood-cutting. He was responsible for the endless task of keeping the

brush out back from the creek, and bringing in wagon-loads of wood from the foothills to be sawn into logs for the fires. The week before our first Christmas on Trinchera, John hitched up a team of mules and with Evelyn and me hanging on precariously to the low sides of the wood-wagon, drove up into the foothills through the snow to find a Christmas tree. We bumped our way over the sagebrush until we reached a grove of conifers, their outline against the sky resembling the Indian arrow-heads we sometimes found on the upper ridges.

After choosing our tree from that dark green multitude, we played about, sliding on our stomachs downhill in the snow, our shouts of pleasure mingling with the clang of John's axe and the restless snorting of the mules as they scented a bob-cat on the snow. When the tree had been finally lashed to the wagon, the first stars were already showing and John lit a lantern that hung swaying from one of the wagon poles. As we rode along, warm from our exertions, the spiced scent of the branches all around us, we watched with admiration as John drove the mules through the dusk, standing astride the log-bottom of the wagon, hands deft on the reins. He looked back at us over the dirty sheepskin collar of his makinaw.

"We got us fine tree, hey? Muy grande, this one."

If our friendship with John was warmed by constant association there were others on the long list of Trinchera's inhabitants whom we liked almost as much. One of them was Harve Shannon, the ranch foreman, who loomed as large on our physical horizon as he did in our affections since he stood over six feet four and weighed close to three hundred pounds. Harve was a Texan with a sweet, drawling voice, pitched strangely in the treble as though it had been forced upwards in proportion to his height. His blue eyes twinkled in a red face and he wore his grey Stetson hat pushed back from a bald brow which seemed always to be dewed with sweat. He stumped about in elaborately embroidered cowboy boots, their high heels absurdly reducing the size of his feet so that with his huge stomach and thighs he looked on the verge of overbalancing.

Harve lived with his wife and three daughters, Nanalee,

Bobbie and Blondie, in another adobe house three miles down the valley from us. For some reason, we called the Shannon house The Farm and spent half our time there, as intent on exploring the exciting corners of its granaries, pigsties, barns and hay-lofts, as we were the outbuildings of home territory. It was at The Farm that most of the ranch hands lived—their sleeping-quarters a long, log bunkhouse, from which there floated in slack seasons or during the summer evenings the nostalgic music of a mouth-organ, softly played. The cow-punchers were mainly itinerant, turning up for work just before the round-ups when the ranch payroll suddenly doubled in numbers and the Shannons' Mexican cook pounded the big gong by the front door to summon twenty or more men to a dinner of fried meat and potatoes. These men I knew mostly by sight since they returned season after season, but it was among the ones who stayed the year through that I made my best friends; the best, perhaps, being a very tall emaciated individual from Arkansas who went by the name of High Pockets. No one ever suggested that High Pockets had another name and I never asked him, for while my father, his secretary Mr. Manuel and Harve Shannon undoubtedly knew the personal histories of each of the men employed on the ranch, many of them, like High Pockets, preferred to keep their pasts a secret.

High Pockets wore a conical-shaped hat innocent of dimple or crease, but his long face was gouged by lines, the skin lying flush with his cheekbones. Around his deeply sunburned neck he wore a limp, dirty handkerchief and his legs were fleshless poles under their covering of faded blue denim.

"Hey, kiddie," he would call to me from his seat on the low step of the Bunkhouse door, thin shanks folded under his chin like a grasshopper, "I got sumpin' for you."

"Sumpin'" was a whistle, carved beautifully from a chip of wood, or a small figure on which the features had been painstakingly whittled.

"Come on, let's me an' you practise a little knife-throwin' huh?"

He unfolded himself carefully and walked with long steps

towards a large tree, stopping a distance away, while I watched entranced as his bowie knife whistled into the tree's trunk, its shaft quivering to a stop.

"Know sumpin?" He bent towards me, face expressionless, his voice soft. "I'm the best dad-blamed muk skinner west of the Mississippi. Yes, sir, shore am. •Listen."

The quiet air would he suddenly shivered by a great musical shout that ended on an explosive "Ha-ha-ha"! The sound was a little like the strange, singing, barking calls the cow-punchers made when they were herding beef cattle, but when High Pockets uttered it, I visualised his six-mule team, heard the whip popping angrily, saw the dust rising in clouds—all as he had described it to me.

I never had an opportunity to see him drive six mules at once, but there was a day in winter when I watched him, looking queerly bulky in his red plaid jacket and fur cap, drive a team of four horses across the frozen reservoir, where ice was being cut for storage. Their hooves had been shod with caulked shoes, they trod nervously, muscles straining against the heavy pull of the ice-cakes. It was a job which required great skill and High Pockets showed his training as he urged the horses quietly over the glassy surface, holding them together in a collective effort, watching to see that they pulled steadily enough to prevent a fall which could result in a broken leg.

High Pockets stayed with us for three years. Then one day on a visit to The Farm I found him sitting on the bottom step of the ladder leading up to the granary. He gave me a laconic nod and bent his head once more over the revolver which he was cleaning. I watched interestedly for a time but as he seemed uncommunicative, my questions being answered by a series of grunts, I moved off to look for Nanalee-Shaamon. From behind me there came the sharp report of a gun and I whirled around in fear. While my spotted Welsh pony, Queenie, who had been standing quietly with reins down, broke wind in a sudden spasm of terror and galloped off down the lane. I watched her helplessly for a moment, then hurried back to my friend. High Pockets was staring down at his foot from which he had removed

the sock. His face wore an expression as near to pleasure as I had ever seen it.

"Well, whuddya know," he said softly. "Done shot myself in the foot. Now ain't that sumpin?"

While I stared in fascinated horror at the small blue hole from which blood began to ooze slowly, Harve Shannon panted up, his face scarlet and frowning.

"Hell!" He made it sound like "hay-ull." "What's going on here!"

He took in the situation with a glance and gave me a little push. "Go on now, go on away, kid," and High Pockets looked up at me. "Yeh, you better beat it now," he said.

I went reluctantly, for by this time more men had collected and there was a feeling of tremendous excitement in the air. Queenie was waiting for me at the end of the lane, and as I mounted her I considered for a minute the wisdom of returning. From that distance I could see the swarm of activity near the granary, and I longed to be a witness. But a sudden curious shyness possessed me, quite in contrast to my previous feelings, and I galloped off towards home, sending Queenie at the thank-you-ma'ns with an urgency that caused the sweat to break out in blotches on her fat sides.

I never saw High Pockets again and when I asked where he had gone, my father merely looked vague and replied, "Oh, somewhere; he was just a drifter."

This answer did not satisfy me any more than it could have satisfied my father. But it was the only one available, for I was told that High Pockets insisted that he did not know there had been a bullet left in his revolver. I have many times speculated on the truth of this statement, remembering the near-pleased expression on his scamed face. Perhaps the answer is a simple one. High Pockets planned the whole incident, for this was 1917 and the United States had just entered the war.

To us on Trinchera the war made little impression, at least in terms of privation or violence. We children (for the Schleys now spent their summers on the ranch and there were usually four or more visiting children) changed the Jersey bull's name from



Conrad to Kaiser Bill, rolled bandages and jumped off the cowshed roof in imitation of falling aeroplanes. We also discussed German atrocities, hideous drawings of which we had seen in magazines, and recognised that the brown sugar on our cereal was due to the war, but since everything else we ate remained the same, being grown on the place, we suffered nothing in that quarter.

Nevertheless, the years had brought disturbing changes, and that summer my security was badly shaken when Nana, our German nurse, was taken away for questioning as an enemy alien. Her departure left me feeling lost and fearful and since my father was away also a good deal, I spent more and more time with Aunt Edith. Her earlier decision to adopt me had now become a foreboding reality because, early in 1916, suddenly and illogically, my mother had died in Colorado Springs. Although I believe she suffered from a mild heart condition, there was never an adequate explanation for her death given either to my sister or me. To Evelyn, who had been very close, the shock of her mother's death was devastating, but for me the disappearance of Nana for ever, or so it seemed since no one bothered to tell me that she would come back, was a far greater reality. My mother had never been to me any more than a distant figure, and I have only a handful of memories of her on Trinchera—an elegant, upright figure attired in a white linen riding-habit, mounted on Frothy, her favourite "flea-bitten" grey gelding; the gleam of lamplight on her rings as she turned the pages of a lesson book when teaching me my alphabet; her laughter when my father swung me upside down by the heels and a stream of lump sugar for my favourite horses poured from my pockets on to the floor.

The alphabet memory is one of two which remain with me most clearly, possibly because both were rare manifestations of my mother's recognition of me as her child. The second occasion, alas, is the sharper of the two, since it evoked my mother's anger, but I have clung to it stubbornly through the years as a counterbalance to my somewhat lop-sided progression through life. We are all, in the last analysis, the victims of our early environment.

## DAYS OF ELK AND BUFFALO

The incident took place, as I remember it, soon after dinner, a meal which had been interrupted, as was habitual with us, by frequent excursions to the door to watch the unbelievable sunset colours over Mount Blanca. We had gathered in my father's study and my mother, seated on the couch, called me to her side and stroked my hair gently. In a burst of overwhelming affection, I flung myself into her arms, kissing and nuzzling her until, like a kitten or a puppy in an uncontrollable spasm of joy, I bit her suddenly on the nose. It must have been extremely painful, for she flung me, quite naturally, away from her side, and I stared aghast until my father picked me up, scolding me gently, and the whole affair dissolved under the tender humour of his voice.

Looking back, I marvel at the composure with which my father managed to envelop himself the day he received the news of my mother's death, generously hiding from us the profundity of his grief. She must have been away from Trinchera several weeks and the end had come suddenly, for there was no time for a last bedside visit, or even the precious interval in which to say goodbye to someone who had been of extreme importance in his life. We set off early in the morning for Colorado Springs, Evelyn and Nana in the back seat of the Cadillac, myself bouncing with exuberance and pleasure at being with my father in the front. I remember asking him the ancient question about why a chicken crosses the road, and his reply, gravely given, but entirely satisfactory to me, "I don't know."

"To get to the other side," I screeched, and bounced some more in my delight at having caught him out.

"I don't know."

This phrase set the key for the next few days of my life, and of my sister's, who, shaken by a grief she could not wholly understand, spent hours in useless weeping while Nana tried to console her with futile words.

We attended the funeral, the first and last time I was ever in a church with my father, where I behaved extremely badly and was carried out by Aunt Edith, kicking and screaming, engulfed in a wave of anonymous terror.

The weeks passed slowly until we could go back to Trinchera.

## HIGH POCKETS AND OTHERS

We divided our time between the Antlers Hotel, where we once more had taken refuge, and Aunt Edith's house in Broadmoor. The two bright spots of our enforced sojourn were the elevator boy at the Antlers who taught us to sing "Santa Lucia" in Italian and the purchase by Aunt Edith of an electric brougham, an absurdly dignified vehicle which purred over the gravel roads at five miles an hour while we ran alongside yelling out rudely, "Creep-easy! Creep-easy!"; and Creep-Easy it was named from then on.

In July we all set out once more for the ranch and soon afterwards Nana, wearing her best black serge skirt and her hat with the nodding roses, disappeared for two empty months from my life.

With my father also away, I began to hunt about for another companion, apart from John Roybal or the various animals on whom I bestowed my love. In the end it turned out to be Del Owens who became the victim of my thwarted affections.

Del had arrived on Trinchera a few months previously. My father had been absent on a business trip and hearing the wheels of the Cadillac thumping on the uneven planks of our bridge, I rushed out to meet him, then stopped abruptly as I saw the stranger at his side.

"This is Del Owens," said my father. "He's the best bronc buster in the State."

It took a little time for me to make friends with Del. Something about his manner, the stunned, incredulous expression of his eyes, made me shy and I observed him for some days at a distance, puzzling a little over his presence on the home ranch since, if he had been given the job of breaking in the wild Montana horses, as my father had told me, he should in the natural order of ranch affairs be living down at The Farm where the bronc-riding usually took place. Instead, he occupied a room in our annex next the main building where Mr. Manuel slept, and where the Schoonover family—Roy, Mrs. Schoonover and three children, Margaret, Hazel and Stewart—dwelt in uncertain peace.

The Schoonovers were a recent acquisition. Roy, a large brutish-featured man with a toothbrush moustache and sly,

blue eyes, acted as a kind of chauffeur-cum-second-for<sup>th</sup> man. I never succeeded in wholly liking him and distrusted the spurious friendliness which he displayed, knowing that he sometimes hit his wife and subjected his moronic daughter, Hazel, to the worst form of mental cruelty, that of sarcastic ridicule.

More than anyone Roy resented Del's presence, especially when Del, by his reticence and gentle nature, eventually won my friendship so that I followed him about eagerly, filled with admiration as I perched on the top pole of one of The Farm corals to watch him ride a bronc with nothing but a rope tied round its stomach.

Below me, Harve Shannon was looking on absorbedly, absently rolling a toothpick about behind his small, white teeth.

When Del had vanquished the sweating, indignant animal, Harve glanced up at me with a grin, shaking his head quizzically.

"Man alive he shore is a plenty good caballero. I guess your old man knew what he was a-doin' whin he hired that one."

Beside him, Roy Schoonover emitted a contemptuous "Huh" and walked off abruptly. Harve glanced after him. "Son of a Dutchman!" he said in his high, mild voice and spat a long stream of saliva in Roy's wake.

I was not a little puzzled by Roy's jealous, resentful attitude towards Del, but on the whole it merely strengthened my feelings towards this gentle, silent and somehow mysterious man. In my own loneliness I continued to follow him about like an eager little dog and he accepted my overtures with patience, taught me rope tricks, allowed me to ride with him when he went hunting for a stray horse or let himself be persuaded to go fishing on a Sunday. His eyes were losing some of their queer, inward expression, but he seldom smiled and usually only spoke in monosyllables. My father, returning from his trip, looked pleased at our friendship. "That's right," he said, "Del will look after you."

There was no question, however, of my spending any time with Del when my father was around. More than ever I stuck to his side, fearful that he would vanish again one morning. I felt something different about him, a nervousity and an absent-

mindedness, as though everything within him was concentrated on astringent self-control. He worked with an exhaustive energy, mended wire fences with Del, inspected the lower meadows where the haying season had begun, spent hours at his desk, writing far into the night. He could not have slept much, for I would wake just as the sun was coming up, the cold early light spilling down through the draws to touch our valley, and hear his footsteps on the road outside. I would dress hurriedly, dive out through my window, for I seldom bothered to use the door of my room, and race to the bridge where I could see him, shovel over his shoulder, inspecting the rich verdancy of the alfalfa field. He turned when he heard me running, and held out his hand.

"Hello, little mutt. want to help me mend an irrigation ditch?"

On one of these occasions I caught him inspecting me with a humorous quirk of his lips.

"You look as though the birds had been nesting in your hair, and it might be a good idea if we got you some new boots from Hoaglands. Poor old thing, we're neglecting you."

Neither Evelyn nor I were exactly presentable, although my sister managed better than I to keep herself in order. I usually wore a "middy blouse" and an aged pair of "bloomers" with the elastic missing from one leg so that it hung down over my boot top, the soles of my stub-toed boots were flapping, my hair, which I wore in a square bob, was snarled, the fringe in need of cutting, and I was burned a dark chestnut colour by the sun.

My father chuckled suddenly and with his arm around my shoulder gave me a little hug. "Never mind, Nana is coming home soon."

"Is she! Is she really, Daddy?"

But I did not really care at that moment for I was utterly content.

That same morning my father gave me a hat, an old tweed fishing-hat which he had brought back with him years before from Scotland. Although it came down around my ears, I wore

it day in and day out and it remained as long as I possessed it one of my greatest treasures.

Soon after Nana returned, my father went off again on one of his, to me, obscure voyages. Before leaving, he suggested that the Schley boys, Evelyn and I, with Del Owens as our guide, take a pack-trip to Trinchera Peak. If he expected enthusiasm from me he must have been disappointed, for I burst into tears, flung myself into his arms and howled, "But you said *you'd* take us! I don't want to go with anyone but you!"

He looked distressed. "But I've got to go away, pun'kin."  
 "All right then, I'll *run* away!" and suiting action to word, I tore out of the house to the woods, where I hid all day in the thick willows, hearing the distant dinner-bell with a martyr's ears, even while my empty stomach sent up rumbling signals of anxiety. For a long while I lay on my stomach staring into the little stream, studying the bright deposit of fool's gold through the clear water. Blackbirds, inspecting my quiet body, ventured close or flew low over my head, sounding their sweet, liquid whistle. A katydid shrilled endlessly in the deep grass near my elbow and the flies buzzed in sleepy indolence. I slapped lazily at a mosquito, then was suddenly asleep myself, lost for an hour to love and disappointment alike. When I awoke I decided to play my favourite game—that, of pretending to be a horse. Far better than being a *person* anyway, I decided from the depths of my frustration. I cut a fine, richly leaved willow branch and spent the next half-hour champing and switching my willow-tail, blowing out my breath to imitate a horse's snorting, imagining that I was one of the steeds from Rosa Bonheur's painting, reduced—since my imagination had its practical side—to the more utilitarian purposes of ranch life. So engrossed was I that I failed to hear the rustling sound of someone coming through the willows until, warned by instinct, I turned sharply to see my father watching me. For a moment I wavered on the edge of a dreadful humiliation, caught as I was in the secret manifestations of my fantasy existence. But he said nothing, only gave me a little nod and a wink and was gone as silently as he had come.

Two days later we were on our way to Trinchera Peak. The

day was brilliant, the air sparkling and heady so that in the words of Governor Gilpin "all infections and miasmas of both spirit and body" had temporarily vanished. At our approach the half-wild, red-and-snow-patterned range cattle vanished from their salt-licks in the draws with plunging fear, and we could hear their crashing flight as it died away in the heavy undergrowth. We sang and told stories, talked to our horses, watched the high ridges for deer or elk. We were pioneers, Indians, scouts, lords of everything we beheld; our freedom and our youth seemed limitless. Even Del let a smile cross his pale face occasionally, and once turned his horse off the trail and drove it at a gallop towards an immense fallen tree, clearing it like a bird, with a deliberate exhibitionism which pleased us mightily.

Gradually the trail grew steeper and we fell into Indian file, sometimes forced to get off and lead our horses, stopping occasionally to watch a covey of mountain grouse in their buzzing escape, through the tree tops. After six hours, interrupted once for a quick lunch by a mountain spring, we reached the foot of Trinchera, emerging sweaty, scratched and breathless from the heavy enclosure of timberland into a clearing where a little upland meadow patterned with the gold and purple of monkey flowers and king's crown swept up to meet the dense grove of towering Douglas firs and the blue-black of spruce trees. Above rose the Peak, inviting yet a little fearful in its enormity.

Del was studying his map, drawn by my father in his neat, careful hand.

"Your Dad shore knows this country," he said. "Looks like we hit her right on the nail. This here is where we make camp."

"Uncle Bryant knows everything," said my cousin Turner proudly. "He's a wonderful man."

Del looked at him with a strange intensity. "You said it, Kid, he's one of the best that ever walked this here earth."

After unsaddling the horses and watering them in the gushing icy stream that ran down from Trinchera's snow-banks, we tethered them where the grass grew most thickly and settled ourselves by the camp fire to eat a huge meal of flapjacks, bacon and beans which Del had prepared. Between mouthfuls we

discussed our trip to the beaver dams tomorrow and laid bets as to which of us would reach the top of Trinchera first.

"It's probably a lot further than it seems," said my cousin Grant sensibly, and Del agreed with him.

I looked up at the great slopes. Already the light had left that side of the mountains and was slipping from the spot where we were sitting. The night was rolling up through the ravines and gullies and abruptly we were aware of the enormous silence surrounding us. Our chatter died away and we felt the wilderness pressing in, tangible and unconquerable.

"Time to hit the hay," said Del.

Tucked into my sleeping-bag between Turner and Grant, I lay listening to the first coyotes sharpening their voices on the night. A screech-owl sent up its cry and I saw Del, his face steely in the firelight, turn to glance briefly at the darkness behind him. He did not seem to want to go to bed yet but sat on by the fire, not doing anything, just staring into the leaping flames.

I could see the shape of Grant's bristly, blond head emerging from his sleeping-bag and put out a grubby paw to touch him.

"Grant, what do you think is the matter with Del? Why is he always by himself? Why doesn't he ever say very much?"

On my other side, Turner twisted in the confining thickness of his bag, bringing his head close to mine. "

"I know," he whispered. "Roy Schoonover told me. He's been in the pen for——"

"Ssh! he's coming over."

Del stood above us and I saw that his boots were designed in a pattern of butterfly wings.

"You kids had better get some sleep," he said gently. "We got us a big day tomorrow."

"All right, Del," we said in chorus.

But later I nudged Turner again. "Why was he in the pen—that's jail, isn't it?"

"Of course, you dope. Yes, Roy told me that Del killed a man once and had to be shut up."

He was silent for a minute while I digested this astorishing information. Grant whispered, "I guess it must have been self-



defence or they wouldn't have let him go. Probably no one would give him a job except Uncle Bryant."

Turner shifted again in his blankets.

"I want to be like Uncle Bryant when I grow up. Gee, I wish we had outlaws and people like that now. Remember the time he ran away with the desperadoes in Montezuma?"

Of course I remembered, so well that I considered Turner's question hardly merited an answer. Nor did he, for a minute later I heard even breathing and knew he was asleep.

Had it been like this, I wondered, when my father slept by the desperadoes' camp fire. Were they to be forgiven, as Del Owens had been forgiven? Not everyone forgot, though. Roy Schoonover hadn't. That was why he didn't like Del. But Roy was not really a good man, whereas my father was. So if my father had forgiven Del, then—but at this point in my reasoning, sleep descended like a bludgeon.

## VI

### THE TIME THE DEVIL CAME

THE END of the war coincided with the beginning of a period of childish violence in which Turner and I, at least in retrospect, appear to have been the worst offenders. My sister Evelyn, approaching fourteen, lived for the most part in a fantasy world from which she regarded us younger ones with an air of slightly disdainful superiority. Her companion in this lofty existence was a friend from Colorado Springs, Caroline Swift, one of the habitual visitors to Trinchera, a large, pretty girl with eyes like gentians. I looked on both with respectful admiration and wasted much of my time in running after them in an effort to be recognised, crying, "Wait for me! Wait for sister!" On only one occasion was I permitted to be a party to their secret undertakings, when Evelyn, with an impressive sense of ritual, buried her large, French doll in four feet of earth, 'announcing dramatically that from this time forward she was no longer to be considered a child.

Most of my days, however, were spent with the Schleys and another frequent visitor, Maurice Hager, a lively boy with spectacles and a gentle disposition. I felt myself to be almost an equal with my companions, except during those moments when, with the simplicity of young animals, we paused on one of our rambles in the woods to urinate among the trees and I enviously watched the boys, including little Chal, my junior by two years, spraying the leaves with their superior male equipment in a fine display of marksmanship. It may have been my feelings of vague inferiority, induced by these occasions, which drove me to unnecessary lengths in an effort to establish myself in the eyes of my playmates as being of approximate endowments, even

though I was a girl. In our games of cowboy and outlaw, Indian and rustler, when there was a question of a rescue to be performed I, as the sole female, was always cast in the role of the rescued, receiving a certain melancholy pleasure from my part in spite of my resentment at the ease with which my companions relegated me to this weak position.

Although Turner was the model for my ambitions, he was also, paradoxically, my first love, and since he reciprocated my feelings, we were seldom far apart. One of our shared enthusiasms was reading, for which we had an insatiable hunger, and our imaginations ran on such parallel lines that we were able to tell each other endless serialised stories, one unhesitatingly taking up the narrative from the point where the other left off. In our more adventurous activities we aided and abetted one another to the point of foolhardiness; one morning we might even have drowned if it had not been for Grant, who even at the age of twelve was already showing a strong sense of responsibility.

Behind Aunt Edith's house, which lay a quarter of a mile from my own, Trinchera Creek narrowed between steep banks, its current running swift and deep before it widened again into shallower reaches at the entrance to the woods. Here, someone had left an eight-foot plank which barely reached from shore to shore and which, under the constant assault of rain and snow, had become warped so that it now curved in the middle. After consultation, Turner and I decided that it might be a good plan if we were to jump up and down on this curve, providing we even arrived at that point, the crossing of the plank itself being fraught with danger. However, we succeeded in reaching our goal, the rotten wood cracked under our feet and we plunged down into the icy water, crying out with terror and shock. Cal, watching with large, dark eyes from the bank, added his voice to ours, and Grant came running, plunged into the creek and amid gaspings and shrieks hauled us to the shore. Grant was praised and hugged; Turner and I were scolded, shaken and hugged, alternately, and all three of us were given hot baths, drinks and rub-downs.

Still sniffing, I sat beside my Franklin stove, listening to Nana as she kept up a scolding commentary on my behaviour, my fear

gradually subsiding under the sense of well-being that was beginning to flow through my veins. The wood in the stove snapped crisply and gave off a fragrant smell; my saturated clothes steamed in the warmth. I looked down at the pink freshness of my dress, and smoothed its unaccustomed skirt, wriggling my toes in their light-feeling strapped slippers. Perhaps, after all, it was quite a pleasant thing to be a girl.

The next morning, however, dressed once more in my lamentable bloomers and middy blouse, I was down in the stable by seven o'clock. At eight, I had been sent away from the breakfast table by my father in order to change my boots, which smelled overwhelmingly of manure. At half past eight, my stomach swollen by a hasty intake of eggs and bacon, I was standing by the machine shed with Turner, watching Ed Breneman, the blacksmith from Fort Garland, as he shod our saddle-horses, the mules and the two teams of huge-footed Percheron work horses which were kept for the heavy jobs on the place.

Ed came several times every summer and we considered his arrival an important event in the curriculum of the ranch. He was a tall, round-shouldered man with a squint, which, together with the brown stains of chewing-tobacco elongating the corners of his mouth, gave him the look of an evil clown. We would attempt to emulate Ed's ability at spitting; using for our purposes a mixture of green alfalfa and bran, but we could never achieve either his sound or his distance. He was an extremely able blacksmith and we would watch absorbedly as his sharp knife shaped the hoof and dug out the tender, rotten spots near the frog, marvelling at the accuracy with which he drove home each nail in the shiny, new shoe. The rasp of his long file against the grey-white hoof was like the sound of his own breathing and when he hammered the hot metal against his anvil, the blows were delivered with a viciousness which made us wince. Usually, he accompanied his work by a monologue, compounded of information concerning the horses he had shod in the past and a kind of leering facetiousness which made us giggle, without knowing why. If my sister and Caroline Swift were present, he would address his remarks mainly towards them, commenting

on their appearance or their physical development with an overtone of meaning which obscurely excited all of us. A quiet witness to everything during the shoeing was John Roybal, whose job it was to hold the horses.

On this visit, however, Ed was curiously uncommunicative and when we begged, as we always did, to be allowed to hand him the nails or pound the anvil just once, he refused with a violence that took us aback, gesturing with the pincers in which he held a shoe as though he might throw the lot in our faces. We watched silently after that, as he dug and prodded the hind foot of my blue roan gelding, Monk, sweat running down his face into the grey stubble of his beard.

"Be careful, Ed," I said suddenly. "I think Monk has a corn in that foot. He's been lumping."

Ed said nothing, but he showed that he had heard by giving a sudden, vigorous twist of his knife into the tender spot, so that I cried out in horror and Monk, shocked by the abrupt pain, reared up with an outraged snort, dragging John Roybal with him.

Ed had held up his arm in a threatening gesture, as though he were going to hit Monk across the face.

"Ah-h-h," he exclaimed in a long-drawn, savage breath, his face distorted with such fury that we stared in astonishment. What could be the matter with him!

As though conscious of our eyes, he turned on us suddenly.

"Go on, you kids. Git away from me. Ain't gonna be no goddam kids telling me how to do my work. Go on now, git away, you hear! Git away!"

He advanced on us slowly, his body stooped, the squint worse than ever, his stained lips parted in an angry grimace. To me he resembled at that moment the pictures of Satan in my *Book of Knowledge*.

John, holding Monk by the cheek-strap, gave us an anxious nod.

"Si, you kids vamoze. No good stay here."

We went, at first with deliberate slowness, feeling we had been wrong, then gradually increasing our speed until we had begun

to run—down the lane and through the cow pasture to the stream's edge where we threw ourselves panting on the bank, crushing the wild gold iris under our bodies.

"He did it on purpose," I said. "I don't like Ed."

"Something's the matter with him. Maybe he's crazy. Gosh! did you see his face?"

For a little while we stayed where we were, the warm fragrance of wild timothy and sweet clover around us, our eyes following the swift iridescence of a dragonfly's passage. Then, restless again, we wandered back to the stables, carefully avoiding the machine shed where we could see Ed still bent over his work. Sitting on the vegetable cellar we found the three Schoonover children, looking, with their vegetable pallor and their round heads, like the turnips piled in the cellar beneath them. Margaret, the eldest, greeted me with gap-toothed smile, for she and I were occasional playmates, our friendship never progressing far since her sentimental preoccupation with dolls did not interest me. Furthermore, she had picked up from her father an ingratiating manner which I distrusted. Hazel simply stared, her sad, moronic eyes swimming like grey fish behind her heavy glasses, while Stewart, the youngest, looked up with a quick ferret-like glance, then sat regarding his hands in painful shyness, his large ears, which grew at right angles to his head, shining transparently in the sun.

"I betcha you kids bin for a nice walk, huh?"

The bright archness of her voice embarrassed us, for we realised how hard she was trying to please. Although we would have preferred to leave the Schoonovers, Margaret had made it difficult as we would have been too conscious of their disappointed gaze following in our wake. We joined them on the concrete mound of the vegetable cellar and for a moment there was silence.

Turner was chewing a piece of hay gloomily. "That old Ed Breneman's an old stinker."

Margaret looked pleased. "My poppa says he drinks," she said amiably.

Turner ignored her, although I could see that he had digested

this piece of information. He pounded his foot against the cellar roof.

"Sounds hollow. Jimminy! I'll bet it's dark in 'there. Let's go in, shall we?"

"All right."

I concealed my doubt, knowing as well as he that the vegetable cellar like the ice-house was forbidden territory, and followed him into the dank, black interior. The air was thick with a sweet-sour smell of decaying vegetables and Turner held his nose exaggeratedly.

"Pee-ugh! It smells something awful!"

At his elbow Margaret chattered excitedly, "We didn't oughta do it. My poppa says——"

Turner rounded on her fiercely. "Aw, dry up!"

Behind Margaret, small Stewart shrank back palely and Turner advanced on him, eyes crossed horribly, tongue stuck out, as he shrieked suddenly at the terrified child, "Git away from me! Go on now, git away!" I recognised a horrid travesty of Ed Brønneman.

"Don't you talk to my brother like that!" yelled Margaret, and picking up a beetroot she heaved it into Turner's face. He immediately retaliated with a potato, I threw another beetroot in the general vicinity of all three Schoonovers, and Hazel, giggling inanely, retrieved Turner's potato and tossed it back. The battle might have died away at this point if Grant, Chal and Maurice Hager had not arrived. Instead, it changed into a general riot, even Grant, after receiving a misdirected turnip on his skull, joining in with a well-aimed potato at Turner's blond head, and in a minute the air was alive with flying vegetables, everyone throwing at everyone else for the sheer pleasure of throwing.

The incident ended when my father suddenly appeared.

"All right," he said quietly. "Now you can clean up the mess."

While we were still toiling with brooms and shovels, Chick, the chore-boy, passed by on his way to feed the chickens. He smirked at us from under the brim of his hat.

"Right busy, aintcha?"

We paid little attention beyond suggesting that he lend us a hand. Chick's presence was one we all took very much for granted. He had been with us from the first year of our life on Trinchera, but I never knew his last name nor where he came from, although we had been told he was an orphan. After a brief career of petty stealing, for which my father had forgiven him following a stern talk behind closed doors, Chick had become a resolute member of the small community, performing his numerous duties with a kind of dreamy intelligence. He was blond with a sloping chin, very blue eyes and a wistful smile, and despite the difference in our ages, he and I had always been good friends. He liked to read and would borrow our books, preferring the novels of Gene Stratton Porter or Ethel M. Dell, while I, although sharing his liking, tried to conceal from him my low secondary taste for "Elsie Dinsmore" and a particularly revolting girl's serial in which the heroine was called "The Little Colonel."

I especially enjoyed accompanying him when he rode out to fetch the milk-cows in the late afternoon, and on one of these outings Chick's day-dreaming resulted in a nasty accident in which I fractured a bone in my spine. It was the habit of my Welsh mare, Queenie, to swell out to balloon-like proportions when being saddled, making it necessary to tighten the girth once more after she had released her breath in a gusty sigh. This time Chick forgot and at the crucial moment of my confronting Kaiser Bill, the evil-tempered Jersey bull, my saddle slipped, my foot caught in the stirrup and I was dragged, howling with pain and fear, the entire length of the pasture. The worst of it was that Kaiser Bill chose to be offended and pursued my distorted form until Queenie's flight led her through some low bushes where I managed to free myself. I lay sobbing and shrieking while the bull, surprised by this sudden change, paused in front of me, pawing the ground and rumbling angrily.

"Chick! Chick! It's the bull. Get the bull!" I wailed despairingly, for at the far end of the field Chick, completely losing his head, had set off after Queenie. Fortunately, he heard my shrieks and came to my rescue at a gallop, his face white with terror.



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I have sometimes wondered if the results of this accident were not worse for Chick than for me. In a week or so I was quite recovered, although still suffused with self-importance, but Chick continued to inquire about my health several times a day, his anxious face showing too clearly the pitiful extent of his insecurity.

At nineteen he had acquired a furtive manner, was careless about his chores and spent far too many hours sleeping in the deep hay of the feed-mangers. Turner and I knew about these stolen illegal hours, and once when we were engaged upon some business of our own—building a miniature corral from new-peeled twigs for my toy animals—Chick's fair head, in which there clung bits of hay, appeared over the top of a manger and he looked down on us with sleepy, swollen eyes, his lips parted in the furtive smile we were beginning to associate with him.

"Bet I know what you kids are doin', you're playin' dirty."

"We're not!"

Turner's voice was indignant, but he threw a sidelong glance at me for, in truth, we had been mating the toys in gleeful emulation of what we saw around us every day.

"Yes, you are. I seen you."

Having forced us into a position where we had to view our innocent play in the light of something "dirty," Chick descended from his hay-bed in order to instruct us verbally in the details of copulation and birth. I listened with some bewilderment since nothing of what he told me was new, my father having taken me more than once to witness the birth of a foal or a calf, while I had many times observed the clumsy breeding of pigs and cattle, or watched from the privacy of a stall the wild, magnificent mating of stallion and mare.

"It's the same with girls and men."

Chick did not look up from where he squatted on his hams in the dust, and Turner, his face red, said "Aw, shucks," his gaze concentrated on a fat hen that picked its foolish way across the corral.

I felt my face burning as I burst out. "Oh, pooh. I know that already!"

Turner stared at me in astonishment. "How do you know?"

But I refused to tell him in front of Chick, nor can I remember that we ever discussed the subject again. The damage was done, for Chick, although merely the victim of that devastating sexual poverty from which we all suffer during the course of our lives, had already infected us with the germs of inhibition and shame.

It was Evelyn who had enlightened me concerning love and procreation between men and women. Perhaps my father thought that by teaching me a respectful wonder for the facts of breeding and birth among animals I would by myself come to associate these happenings with people. Such was not the case. After being lost for a day in the excitingly suggestive passages of *The Sheik*, by E. M. Hull, I came up against a passage following the seduction scene in which there is talk of the imprint of a head upon the pillow. This refined black-out stimulated my prurient curiosity to such a degree that I finally plucked up courage enough to approach my sister for an explanation.

Evelyn gazed at me from the height of her superior knowledge.

"You silly thing. It's what the bull does to the cow."

The shock of this revelation was almost worse than Chick's lascivious interpretation of our play with the toys.

That week of the vegetable fight touched off a series of events in which violence had the upper hand. I am inclined to think that it was Ed Brennieman who brought the devil with him that day, forgetting to call in his wandering demon when he finally returned to Fort Garland. Certainly, Satan was abroad and our behaviour could only have been the result of his whispered suggestions in our ears.

My father's gentle discipline had the briefest effect on us, for we all, including Evelyn and Caroline Swift, met together to commit various nuisances which must have brought our elders close to despair. This sudden mass assault may have been partly caused by the Schley family visiting us temporarily, having been driven from their own quarters by a family of skunks which had settled in odorous comfort under the timbered porch of Aunt Edith's house.

We began by waging war on Kaiser Bill, pelting this aloof and

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important member of the barnyard with evil-smelling rotten eggs which we had discovered in an abandoned hen's nest. Halted in this effort, we splattered the remaining eggs against the side of the stable and made off down the lane to the pasture, where we set our dogs on to the peaceful milk-cows, sending them in a lumbering gallop across the field, their heavy udders swinging against their legs in a movement which Roy Schoonover shouted angrily would "mix their blood with their milk." We let out the turkeys and poured a bottle of beer into the chicken troughs, watching delightedly as the tipsy fowls staggered about, blinking in drunken wonder. Misdirecting the course of three irrigation ditches simultaneously, we fled before John Roybal's flourished shovel and went to tease Billy Goat, who vanquished Satan momentarily by butting Maurice Hager over the fence. Deciding on the spur of the moment to form a club, we initiated all three Schoonovers by forcing them to walk fully clothed through the stream; spat half-chewed cracker crumbs in one another's faces; stole a packet of Pall Mall cigarettes from the living-room which we smoked furtively in the vegetable garden pretending that we were enjoying them. When Grant had shot two fish with his .22 Remington rifle—almost the lowest point in our reign of terror—Satan's hold on most of us began to slip, until, after Turner and I with some half-formed idea of becoming veterinary surgeons had dissected two dead Laby turkeys—whose corpses we had found in a ditch—choosing as our operating theatre the hot, tar roof of the chicken house, peace once more descended.

It would be more accurate to say that peace almost descended, for the Devil made one last effort and this time, I regret to say, I was the only one involved.

Loitering near the machine shed, aimlessly pushing with one foot at the pile of hoof shavings—all that remained of Ed Brenneman's visit—I saw Roy Schoonover come through the gate from the woods, a rifle over his shoulder, in one hand a bulky sack.

"Been shootin' them ornery varmints. Half wild, most of 'em."

I knew he referred to the ever-multiplying number of cats which swarmed about the place, fierce animals who fled at one's approach and were not above stealing the chickens. But I recoiled at the thought of their being shot, in spite of my recent brush with Satan.

"Looky here,"

Roy opened the sack slightly and, I peered down to see a twisting mass of soft fur, heard the sound of little, squeaking mews.

"Got five of 'em in there."

He fixed me suddenly with his cold, blue gaze.

"You wantta drown 'em for me? I'm pretty busy now. Looky, I'll just put a couple of these here big stones in the bottom. Now you take 'em down the creek a bitty ways where they's some deep pools. Won't be no trouble."

A minute later I found myself holding the heavy sack in both hands, stumbling a little as I made my way through the woods to where the swift current slowed against the curving banks to form deep pools. The kittens twisted and heaved in the sack and I heard their voices, shriller this time as though they sensed their danger.

"Oh, the sweet little things, oh, the poor——"

But behind me Roy shouted, "Just a bitty further. They's some good deep pools by them bushes."

I straightened my shoulders and trudged on. Was I not, after all, in a responsible position? Did I not know as well as anyone that there was no place for sentimentality on a ranch? (But the cats kept the rats away.) Besides, these kittens were too young to know anything about life. It would all be over in a minute. (But listen to the mewling!) Furthermore, I would rather like to see what happens when something drowns. (Satan again!)

I reached the pool and heaved the sack into the deepest part, holding it down with both hands. To my horror it grew abruptly lighter, and I realised that the impact of the water against the rocks had burst the rotten sacking so that now all that remained was the frail weight of the kittens' bodies. I lifted the sack and stared with a sick feeling into the milky eyes of a kitten whose head had popped out as it struggled for release. Now the whole

sack was alive in my hands, the little skulls bursting out in all directions, the hair slick and black against the bone. Two of them twisted free and I watched their bodies sailing round and round in the pool as the current quickened where it joined the main stream. The pitiful voices rose about me, despairing and terror-stricken. I pressed a small head down under the water, but it rose up again like a cork, and suddenly, unable to endure it any longer, I cast the sack from me and without waiting to see what happened, I fled back to the house, tears spurting from my eyes, my breath coming in jerky sobs. I locked myself in the bathroom where I vomited at length, while Nana pounded on the door, calling, "Child, child, what's the matter?"

I finally opened the door to my father, whom Nana had summoned in distress and flinging myself into his arms, tried in a long tearful recital to expatiate myself from the whole, unhappy series of events in which I had played so guilty a role, and which the misery of the kittens had brought so pointedly to a head.

Later, I lay on my bed where Nana had sent me, looking up at the ceiling, feeling empty and peaceful. Just outside my window I could hear the tearing sound made by the horses as they grazed on the thick grass. A meadow-lark uttered its clear, delicious whistle, and staring at the ceiling, yet seeing nothing but my inward vision, I composed a poem.

The dawn is breaking, and you and I  
Rest in peace neath the tinted sky.  
The coyote howls, the wild wolf growls  
And the eagle cries in the sky.

It did not occur to me to apologise to Kipling, whom I had been reading lately, and my creative efforts brought me a release out of all proportion to their doubtful results.

I felt I must tell Turner, and I hurried out of the house, calling his name excitedly. He was sitting on the wood-pile, absently pushing a stick in and out of the crisp blond stubble of his hair.

"Hey, where have you been? They got the skunks out."

"Oh, how! Tell me."

"Smoked 'em out. Gee, it was exciting! But the smell——"  
He wrinkled his snub nose, baring his teeth in a grimace of commemorative disgust.

"But where were you, anyway?"

Then I told him about the kittens while he listened frowningly.

"Criminey! It must have been awful! I guess maybe I would have been sick too. That old Roy shouldn't have made you do it."

I felt comforted, almost proud that I had survived such an experience. When remembrance of the kittens' small, swirling bodies clouded my story with a renewal of remorse, I put the feeling away from me, just as I had set aside my decision to tell Turner of my poem. Both remorse and poetry had their place, one perhaps growing out of the other, but now I felt was not the moment to speak of them.

Turner stretched and yawned widely.

"Gosh, I'm tired. You know what?"

"What?"

"Mother says we've got to have a tutor, and that means you too because I heard her talking to Uncle Bryant."

"A tutor! What for? Who wants a tutor anyway?"

"Not me for one." Turner closed one eye and took imaginary aim at the tutor who in the form of a chipmunk was now sitting on a tree-stump a few feet away.

"Bang! Got him!" He turned his head to look at me, grinning wickedly. "I'll fix that old tutor, you wait and see."

John passed us, carrying a stack of kindling. He smiled at me.

"Monk, he got good pair of shoes now. Ed, he finish all right."

"What was wrong with him, anyway, John?"

John sent a brown stream of tobacco juice into the air, then shrugged his thin shoulders.

"Oh, that hombre, he crazy-drunk. You kids forget it."

We took his advice, but not until the matter had been thoroughly discussed and we had added this new piece of information involving human weakness to our rapidly growing store.

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A few days later we learned that Ed had been jailed for knifing a man during a drunken brawl in Fort Garland and we never saw him again. After that, the shoeing was done by John Roybal, but although his work was adequate, we seldom stayed long to watch. Perhaps we missed the sight of Ed's sure fingers for, crazy-drunk or sober, he was a master blacksmith.

## VII

### THE ELK HUNT

THE CENTRE of all directional activity was naturally the home-ranch—which also included The Farm. However, on a property of such large dimensions it was necessary to have smaller, subsidiary headquarters from which operations could function smoothly according to the season of the year. Such a one was Ute Ranch, so called because of the creek which flowed through it from Ute Canyon where years before the Espinoza brothers had met their end.

Ute Ranch lay about fifteen miles to the west of Trinchera Valley towards La Veta Pass and was most easily reached on horseback by a trail over the piñon bluffs, thereby cutting out five miles of highway. Over this same trail my father had at one time laid a telephone wire, deciding that it might be wise to maintain some kind of contact with the outer world. He later regretted his decision when, during the summer, we were besieged by calls from the San Luis Valley ranchers for permission to fish, and when the cost of maintenance became too great. Furthermore, the peace of the house was shattered by shrill, prolonged ringing, for it was the old type, party-line wall telephone, where the caller summons his prey by a certain designated number of rings. Our own number was seven, and Evelyn and I, to our delight, were able to listen in to conversations from one ring through six at any time of the day, a form of amusement in which we indulged frequently, unless caught at it and reprimanded for our lack of manners. We were, therefore, somewhat disappointed when, after eight months, my father gave orders to have the wire cut and the poles, wherever they had fallen, gathered into heaps. Riding along the trail, we would sometimes



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pass a pole still standing, but most of them had long since been uprooted by the heavy pressure of wind-driven snow, or the torrential burst of a mountain rainstorm.

Ute Ranch was used primarily as a winter feeding-ground for the range cattle, since it consisted mainly of bottom-land, rich in wild timothy and clover—part of the 6,000-acre agricultural land of the Trinchera. Here the older cattle would feed off the bundles of hay that had been tossed from the hay-wagons in lines across the white surface of the snow, soon churned and sulphur-coloured from hundreds of eager hooves. The season's weanlings would be fed in greedy aloofness in the nearby corrals, their stupid yet somehow charming faces repeated in a long pattern of white and red as they nuzzled and champed down the rows of the feed-mangers, watching us between mouthfuls from their wide-apart, shallow eyes. Here too were the dipping-vats where we spent excited hours watching the stream of bewildered cattle being prodded and coaxed into their milky-yellow creosote bath from which they emerged dripping and odorous, but presumably free from the ticks which infested them.

The main focus of attention at Ute Ranch, however, was the Game Park, a 9,000-acre tract of mountainous country which had been set aside as a private game preserve and where the open season for shooting by State law could never apply. Within these prescribed limits, which were enclosed by a massive fence, ten feet high, its heavy wire squares topped by bristling strands of extra-thick barbed wire, existed large numbers of elk and deer and a herd of three hundred-odd buffalo, a small but fierce remainder of the enormous bands that at one time swarmed over the western prairies and mountains before the destructive gluttony of the pioneers had reduced their numbers so pitifully.

When we first arrived at Trinchera there had been a few antelope, but these delicate, lovely creatures had gradually disappeared, the last of them, a doe, being shot down by a wanton bullet fired from some passing car. Alas, the public highway, as it descended from La Veta Pass, ran for a short distance along the Game Park fence and we would often find, from the discovery of a deer or elk corpse, that the desire to kill for the sake of

killing had not perished with those early explorers. I was with my father on the occasion when we came across the antelope's body and it was one of the few times in my life with him that I recognised the controlled strength of his anger.

Looking down at the antelope's stiffened, bloody form, he said slowly, "It's murder, plain, cold-blooded murder."

And so, of course, it was. There could have been no possibility of the hunter retrieving his kill through that impregnable fence, even for the sake of a souvenir, and since this must have been recognised in advance, there could be no other label attached to the man who fired the shot than that of murderer.

I am not certain who was originally responsible for building the Game Park, but it may have been Governor Gilpin or one of his followers who, before my father bought Trinchera, had attempted unsuccessfully to establish a ranch on the west side of the Sangre de Cristo Grant, the side including Mount Blanca and Baldy, which afterwards was to become a part of Trinchera Ranch.

The twelve-foot high, cross-barred gate to the Game Park was locked by a heavy padlock, the keys being entrusted to a bent, seam-faced little Mexican named Garcia Dan who lived in an adobe shack adjacent to the feeding-grounds. Garcia Dan was yet another of my father's protégés with a questionable background. Harve Shannon, showing the harsh prejudice which inflicts many Texans, declared that he "wouldn't put anything past a Mexican," hinting that Garcia Dan had killed his wife during a fit of jealous rage. This allegation was difficult to believe whenever I chatted with the bright-eyed, kindly old man, and my father, on being questioned, smiled vaguely, saying, "Oh, Garcia's a good little fellow. Whatever he did wrong happened a long time ago, too long to bother about."

We made two or three trips to the Game Park every summer, but on only a few occasions did we shoot any game, for my father's regulations concerning hunting were carefully observed by all of us. These regulations were simple. "Never kill an animal unless:

You kill for meat.

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In self-defence.

If the animal is in incurable pain.

If it is the type of animal which preys on domestic livestock.

Naturally deer and elk could not be included in the last category, but even the taste of venison or elk meat was a novelty to us, appearing only on our dinner table in extraneous, urgent circumstances when my father had been forced to take business acquaintances or "sporting" friends on a day-long hunt in the Game Park in quest of a good head of antlers.

Buffalo, on the other hand, were quite a different affair. It was as though they nursed a slow-burning desire to vindicate the mass slaughter of their ancestors, for with their powerful shoulders and almost malicious intelligence they could be enormously destructive, creating for themselves yet another rule in the set my father had laid down: a buffalo on the rampage must be destroyed.

The high fence around the Game Park was no deterrent to one of these bulls—for it was almost always a male who went berserk—and they would force their way through the heavy wire as though it were the thinnest string. These breakages always took place on the highway side of the Game Park where the unpleasant smell of manure came strongest on the wind and where the small, puffing freight trains of the D. & R.G.W. occasionally passed on the downgrade from La Veta Pass. One bull, inflamed by the sight of the noisy engine, charged it head on, flattening himself on the cow-catcher in a death which was both courageous and, for a buffalo, unique. Near this point along the railroad tracks straggled the small lumber camp of Mortimer, and it was here that the bulls were likely to create the most havoc, tossing and goring the lumbermen's innocent horses and generally running up a huge bill for damages which my father would have to pay.

One spring towards the end of the war, word came to us that a certain bull, known cynically as Old Whiskers, had burst out of the park and after blundering his way across the tracks and through the camp, killing one horse *en route*, had established himself in the lower meadows near Ute Ranch where several

hundred head of cattle were pastured. My father took down his heavy .404 buffalo gun and began to oil it while we watched excitedly, beseeching him to let us accompany him on his mission. I have often wondered why in the end he consented, realising, as he must have done, the danger to which we would be exposed. Perhaps it was because my stepmother (my father had recently married again), also recognising the danger, refused to allow my father to go without her, and we, seeing what we felt to be a conspiracy, argued our way into the expedition on the basis that such obvious jeopardy should be shared by a united family. However it was, we all set off together in the old Cadillac to Ute Ranch, where John Roybal had gone on ahead with a light wagon and a team of mules. Crouched on the floor of this vehicle, John driving and my father standing at his shoulder, the rifle cocked, we drove slowly across the meadows, our hearts pounding, eyeing the silent bushes on every side for a sign of the belligerent old warrior. Finally we saw him, a dark ominous shape standing, rump towards us, under a large tree on the far side of the meadow.

"Stop here, John."

My father slid from the wagon and at the same time the bull turned slowly around and we saw that his absurdly short tail was erect and stiff—the sure sign of an angry buffalo.

My father walked a few yards away from the wagon, at an angle where any sudden charge from Whiskers would not be directed towards us, and as we watched, fingers in our ears, took careful aim and fired. The shocking roar of the gun sent the mules into a frenzy of fear so that the wagon rocked and John had all he could manage to calm his team. But Whiskers had fallen, dropping on his knees, his muzzle ploughing the grass, blood spurting from the wound behind his shoulder. It was a terrifying and pitiful sight. But without any warning, he was miraculously on his feet again and charging straight at my father, who with what we took to be insane foolishness did not move from his place. Again the gun's roar tore the air apart, and unable to endure the sight or the sound any longer, I buried my head in my stepmother's lap with a shriek of terror.

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The echo of the shot died away and I heard my father's voice shouting, "It's all over. Don't be afraid."

Later John told me that my father, after firing the second shot, had merely stepped aside as the buffalo, receiving the bullet in his heart, plunged across the few feet that separated them to fall with a rending sound of branches into a group of saplings.

We tumbled out of the wagon, feeling now that the danger was past, bloodthirsty and filled with excited curiosity. As we ran towards the inert, brown bulk, there came another sound of crashing among the bushes, and we stopped short, wondering if Whiskers had revived once more. But the enormous body did not move and as we gazed, the bushes parted to reveal a young Hereford cow, her eyes fearful, her flanks heaving. She uttered a strangled bellow and rushed past us, circling round to come to a halt a little way off, watching us as we moved on. A minute afterwards, we discovered the cause of her anxiety, which at first we had taken to be the result of the gun's roar. Lying on the leaves, the great mass of the buffalo less than a foot from its body, was a new-born calf, its hide still glistening from the womb's liquid, its eyes huge and dazed in a frail skull. It could not have been more than a few minutes old and its birth must have been almost simultaneous with the buffalo's death.

If these circumstances were necessarily overhung by a certain tragedy, there were other occasions when our hunting trips were filled with humorous incident, thereby mitigating the disagreeable fact that the motive was to kill. Most of our excursions consisted merely of "looking," which meant that we spent whole days riding over the mountains, watching the wild life through field-glasses, tethering our horses well to the rear and concealing ourselves up-wind from a herd of elk or deer. With the aid of my father, we studied the habits of these animals; learned how they slept under the trees during the hot, noon hours; watched as they fed on the hillsides or wandered down to the stream to drink towards sunset. Sometimes, we were lucky enough to hear the coughing, whistling bleat of a bull elk (I cannot imagine why this sound has been likened to a bugle call) or watch the voluptuous movements of a herd of deer as they heaved and

wallowed in their shallow mud-baths near the stream, ridding themselves of the swarms of malignant, sharp-stinging deer-flies that besieged them. If we came across any buffalo we usually gave them a wide berth, knowing that they could run faster than a horse in rough country.

The training we received from these expeditions taught us to watch constantly for wild life on the wider reaches of the ranch proper, where the game was far more numerous but less concentrated; yet the excitement, the quality of magic attached to those days inside the Game Park could never quite be equalled. Perhaps it was because, once Garcia Dan had closed the huge gates behind us, and we had begun our climb up the first stony trail leading to the high ridges where the pale bunch-grass bowed to the wind's sweep, we felt that we had crossed the boundary from one country into another, and that at almost any minute our eyes would be rewarded by the glimpse of another form of existence which it was our privilege alone to see.

We were not always so fortunate, however, returning home on some days without having seen a single living creature, apart from the prairie-dogs who chattered at us sarcastically from the scattered dirt mounds of their colony. On other days our patience would net us the one thing we always hoped most to see—the wonderful, soaring flight of an albino deer. There were two—possibly more—of these rare creatures in the park and curiously, we never saw them except in pairs or alone. They had the same characteristics as the other deer—chiefly mule-deer—but by their colour alone they appeared to belong to another race and another world. It seems to me there are few things more beautiful than these white, exquisitely graceful animals as they bound up a hillside, each leap taking them ten to fifteen feet, so that they look almost as though they were flying. So quickly did they vanish from our sight that we were left each time with a sense of unreality, as though we had caught sight of a passing, winged dream.

Perhaps the most memorable occasion, seen from a tragicomic point of view, was the day when we took Uncle Palmer to shoot an elk. Uncle Palmer was Tante's husband, a humorous,

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gentle person to whom we were all devoted. His desire to "bag" a fine pair of antlers met with our instant approval, for we were certainly not averse to the excitements of an authorised hunt. My father was away at the time, and I feel now that his absence was the chief contributory factor in a day which so nearly ended in disaster. Harve Shannon had been delegated to lead the expedition, in itself a possible mistake, for Harve was not so much a woodsman and hunter as a cow-puncher. Besides Uncle Palmer and Harve, the party consisted of Uncle Palmer's daughter Ann, Grant, Chal and myself and Harve's nephew Cheese, a robust young man with Harve's red face and bright blue eyes. Cheese had been brought along to take charge of Kate, the black pack-mule, and since Kate turned out to be the main protagonist in the day's events, perhaps I should describe her in detail. She was a bohy, sour-tempered animal given to tantrums that were not unlike Baptista's shrewish daughter, although it is highly unlikely that she had been named after this lady.

At the same time she could be as docile as a well-trained dog and would accept offerings of carrots, bread or sugar with a faintly patronising air, her tall ears drooping sideways like the outmoded hat of some refined spinster. Chewing with an air of absent-minded pleasure, she would suddenly let her bottom jaw swing loose as though she had forgotten how it worked, letting the whole semi-masticated, slimy mess drop out on to the ground, after which she would blow her nose with a vigorous, contemptuous breath and stalk away, her ridiculous, tasselled tail switching violently from side to side.

She was given to breaking out from whatever pasture or paddock in which she had been enclosed, achieving this without any vulgar display of crushed wire or splintered boards, but with an uncannily human ability to work loose a gate's fastening with her teeth. Later she would be found in a spot where she would be likely to do the most damage, such as a newly planted flower-bed, or in the midst of a row of young lettuces which she found greatly to her taste. My stepmother's efforts at adapting herself to a strange environment were scarcely helped by falling over Kate's recumbent body one dark night when walking up the road

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to Aunt Edith's house. With characteristic insolence, Kate ignored the sudden presence of a human, half-sitting, half-lying across her ribby back, and did not move.

"Good heavens!" said my stepmother afterwards. "I was panic-stricken. It could have been a bear!"

Kate was in one of her docile moods when we first set off that day. Cheese led her, sure-footed, her long mule-hooves stepping delicately over the intermittent, small boulders. She lay second in the Indian-file procession, with Harve in front, Uncle Palmer third, and the rest of us strung out in the rear. Half-way up the ridge, Kate decided to urinate, achieving this with an air of gloomy satisfaction, while behind her the rest of our horses, as though at a given signal, emulated her act one by one until the still air was loud with the sound of splashing and pleased grunts while Harve Shannon, after an annoyed glance backwards, settled philosophically in the saddle as his own monumental steed followed suit. It was a situation with which we were familiar and which never failed to incite the cruder side of our risibility. But the presence of visitors forced us to control our mirth and it was not until we had moved on once more that we showed signs of our frustration by explosive giggles so that Harve was forced to tell us to "shut up." Indeed, we were making far too much commotion, our conversation at these times being as a rule muted to a whisper. It may have been the noisy beginning, heralding our approach to all the game within earshot, or it may have been Harve's inability to read the game trails properly, or stay up-wind, but whatever the case, we rode all morning without sighting a living creature. To make matters worse, it was an exceptionally hot day and Kate, now relegated to the rear, decided that she had had enough and refused to be led farther.

"God-durn you, come on!"

Cheese's frantic whisper faded, for he had seen, just as we all had, the abrupt gesture of Harve's beefy hand raised in warning. Game had been sighted!

We dropped from our horses and crawled up to where Harve squatted on thick hams, Uncle Palmer beside him. There in a



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slight hollow on the other side of the draw, their bodies dappled by the shade of a cluster of cedar trees, were two elk.

"A bull and a doe," whispered Harve. "Here, rifle's rarin' to go. Now you just aim for that bull—"

Uncle Palmer, his face pale with excitement, drew a bead, the heavy gun quivering slightly in his grasp.

The roar of the shot reverberated over the hills, but it was little louder than Harve's voice as he bellowed, "Gawd-almighty, Mister, you've shot the doe!"

It was true. The doe lay kicking in a death-agony, while the bull, his fine antlers held high, bounded down the hill in terror.

Another shot cracked out, then another, and we saw the bull drop from view behind a heavy growth of sagebrush.

"Think I got him. Hell, you wanted the antlers, didn't you? Man, oh man, didja ever see anything like this!"

Harve sank back from the kneeling position in which he had made the second kill, then immediately let out a bellow of pain.

"Hell and be-jesus! I've sat in a goddamned cactus!"

We helped him to his feet while he gave orders to Cheese and Grant between groans.

"Get on down there, kids. Bleed thim old elk if you want to save the meat. Hurry now."

He unbuckled the heavy buckskin chaps which he wore over his blue jeans, letting them slide down with a look of disgust.

"Hell, a man don't figger on bein' in a position where he's got to wear leather on his backside too."

After dressing the bodies of the two elk, we left them strung up from a cedar tree, and rode down to eat our lunch by the edge of Ute Creek. Harve, with Grant as assistant, disappeared modestly behind a clump of trees from which we could hear his bellows of pain from time to time as a cactus needle was extracted. We consumed our sandwiches more or less in silence, no one wishing to refer to Uncle Palmer's mistake. The air was close and hot and we slapped angrily at the horseflies that hummed about our ears. Harve's chaps lay on the ground nearby and presently I noticed that Kate, exploring the distance allowed her by the tethering rope, had arrived beside them. She sniffed contemptu-

ously, stepped across the expanse of leather, then stopped and, lifting her tail, deposited a mound of dung with uncanny accuracy. At the same moment, Harve emerged from behind the trees, and seeing this further outrage in the act of perpetration, raised his great voice in a roar of extravagant profanity which he managed to subdue with difficulty, remembering that we were present, letting his curses die into obscure muttering.

"Take 'em down to the crik, Cheese, and scrub 'em off," he said finally, then raised his head to look at the purple-black rain-clouds that were gathering above the ridges.

"We better get a wiggle on. Sure looks like we're gonna have us one helluva storm."

Twenty minutes later, the corpses of the elk had been roped tightly across Kate's pack-saddle, their long slender legs hanging down limply on either side. I stared for a minute remorsefully at the wide, glazed eyes, but my pity had been strongest at the moment of death, for now it passed quickly and like the others I became chiefly interested in Kate's behaviour.

During the process of loading, she had stood rigidly, her long legs spread, her head pressed against Harve's stomach as he held her ears so that she would not fidget. From where I stood I could see one large eye rolling balefully, and I noticed that her shoulder muscles were quivering slightly.

"Don't reckon she'll lead, Uncle Harve."

Cheese gave the ropes a final knotting. "She's feeling real ornery today."

"We'll just leave her go on ahead. She sure enough knows the way down to the gate."

Harve grinned suddenly. "Hell! Looks like I oughta be the one lying on my belly over that pack-saddle. Gonna need me a sofy cushion before I get home."

He let go Kate's ears and stepped aside, then snatching off his hat he whacked it across Kate's narrow, black rump with a vindictive swipe.

"Vamos! Go on, now git, you long-eared, mean black devil! Yah-a-a! Beat it now!"

Kate shook her head crossly, raised one hind leg as though to

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kick, lowered it again and then set off down the draw in a curious crab-wise lope, the dust puffing up under her heels until it had nearly enveloped her.

Harve sighed. "Reckon we'll find her waiting by the fence." He looked unhappily at his horse. "Wisht I had me a derrick. That old cayuse sure stands high when a man's had his tail full of cactus thorns."

He climbed aboard painfully, and we started off in the wake of Kate's dust, the sounds of our progress loud in the heavy stillness preceding the storm. Lightning flickered in the distance and on the higher ridges the sun-cured grass was brilliant against the ominous, bruised mass of thunder-clouds. We were relieved to be on our way, and thankful that Kate had performed satisfactorily the duty assigned her.

A mile farther down the draw we discovered how incorrect had been this last assumption, for Kate was waiting for us.

"Well, shoot me down! I never seen a thing like that before!"

Harve reined his horse to a standstill, and we gathered beside him, gaping at the spectacle before us.

Kate, with a cunning of which only she held the secret, had managed to shake off both elk and pack-saddle and was sitting on the ground like a dog, her ears flattened to her head, her gums showing in what seemed like an evil grin as she tore furiously at the stiff hair of one of the bodies.

It took us more than half an hour to saddle and load her again, for she was seething with a malicious anger, and lashed out in all directions with her sharp hooves. This time Harve blindfolded her, adding to her indignation, and she grunted and coughed and flattened her ears until they lay flush with her skull. The hide of the bull elk had by now decreased in value, for she had left bald patches here and there from the frenzied assault of her teeth.

"I figger that'll hold her."

Cheese looked at his handiwork proudly. "Done fixed the cinch again and cross-roped them carcasses four time."

Kate's second departure was even more erratic than her first, for she began by attempting to buck off the bodies, then, finding this impossible, she galloped away, squealing with anger. This

time we hurried after, fearing that she would find some other method of damaging her hated burden, as well as inflicting wounds on herself. Harve held himself upright by the saddle's cantle, his knees straight, a look of misery on his red face. The thunder rolled closer and large drops of rain fell from time to time across our hot faces. It must have been increasing resentment that added speed to Kate's going; for she had once more disappeared, and when we overtook her for the second time it was on the narrow, rocky trail where she had stopped earlier that day.

This time, however, there was nothing about the circumstances halting our progress to give even the slightest stimulus to any laughter. We were, in fact, beset by a very real and justifiable fear, amounting in some of us to a feeling of panic, as we stood up in our stirrups and craned our necks to stare at what lay ahead down the trail. There Kate stood, her ears still laid back, her head shaking from time to time in an irritated motion which we felt to be totally unreasonable, considering that the object in her path was a buffalo bull!

He confronted the angry little mule with lowered head, huge and uncompromising, his wicked, small eyes watching her, his tail erect. We stared, motionless in our saddles, until the horses, scenting the buffalo, began to stir nervously, sending small pebbles rolling down the steep slope to our left. On our right the hillside mounted straight up, impossible at this point to scale. Although we did not speak, all of us must have been thinking the same thing—the only method of withdrawal was to back our horses slowly to a spot where the trail widened and we could circle above or below, thereby avoiding the buffalo, providing he would let us. "Buffaloes can run faster than a horse in rough country!" The chilly fact kept repeating itself in my head.

Then, without warning, Kate took the initiative. With the sure-footedness of her race, she spun around on the trail and lashed out with both hind legs at the massive and seemingly immovable object barring her way. He uttered a grunt of surprise and backed slightly, so that his rear end, looking peculiarly defenceless by comparison with his massive front half, came

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into view. Kate humped herself and kicked once more, this time squealing a little. The buffalo backed again and the movement carried his hind feet over the edge and suddenly, there he was, ten feet below, the dust rising in clouds about his astounded face.

"Quick. Vámos!" yelled Harve, and we drove our horses at a clattering canter down the steep trail in the wake of Kate, who was already well ahead.

When we reached the bottom we looked back, but there was no sign of the buffalo. Apparently he had conceded the victory to Kate and wisely gone on his way. Then, like a wild fanfare of thanksgiving, there was a great crash of thunder and a dazzle of lightning, and the skies burst, sending down a heavy shower of hailstones like small marbles, that bounced off our shoulders and pitted the dusty track with thousands of tiny holes. We scrambled into our oilskins just before the hail turned into a downpour of rain, and by the time we were once more in motion, Kate had vanished over a ridge. An hour later we reached the gate, and at the same time the rain stopped, its end coming with that startling abruptness so characteristic of a Colorado cloud-burst. One minute we were hunched over our horses' withers, closing our eyes against the storm's violence; the next we were aware of a pervading calm, saw the sky washed in a blue radiance, smelled the wonderful sweetness of wet earth mixed with sage, heard a meadow-lark calling from a fence post.

Kate waited by the big gate, bedraggled and steaming slightly in the sun's warmth. She was cropping grass, and as we approached she raised her bony head to look at us, cocking her long ears and uttering a nasal screech of greeting.

Garcia Dan held her rope.

"Good bill, huh? You got fine antlers there. Bica. You good hunters."

I glanced at the two bodies of the elk, thinking that they appeared to have died from the shock of their ride rather than from the bullets.

Harve slid painfully from his horse and limped over to Kate, beginning to untie the ropes that bound the carcasses.

"Look out, Uncle! She's going to bite!"

But Kate had only moved her head to look at Harve and the two stared at one another for a moment before Kate went back to her peaceful grazing. Garcia Dan tugged at her halter.

"No, let the old black devil eat; she's earned it, I reckon."

Harve laid his big hand on her rump in a gesture very like a caress, turning to grin at us.

"We sure had us a day, didn't we? I kinda thought for a minute we'd 'walked into trouble' back there until Kate went and buffalocd that buffalo."

He clapped his hand suddenly to his large thigh and shouted with pleasure while the rest of us, still reacting to the tense moments through which we had passed, gradually responded, until we were all laughing, while Garcia Dan looked at us in comical amazement and Kate, relieved of her burden, lay down and with a long sigh of contentment began to roll luxuriously in the mud.

## VIII

### “HOW COME YOU DRESS SO PLAIN,”

AT THE time of their marriage, my stepmother, Beatrice Wetmore Turner, was twenty-seven; my father nineteen years older. This discrepancy in age was less important than a certain difference in outlook which could be partly attributed to their ancestry. Whereas my father had an Irishman's easy-going, frequently poetic, and sometimes extravagant optimism, with its corollary of brooding introspection, my stepmother possessed a practical side to her nature which was no doubt the heritage of Dutch forebears. Her laughter was always near the surface and she fell an easy victim to my father's often puckish humour, but at the same time she could be quickly upset by any laxity or alteration in the daily routine of our existence which she felt to be unnecessary.

My own dreamy in consequence, slovenly appearance and my habit of disappearing for whole days at a time without telling anyone where I was going must have been a constant source of vexation to her, but she showed an admirable restraint and imagination by never questioning me on my return, or interfering with my fantasy life. As a result, I loved her dearly and considered her as beautiful as the illustrations of princesses in my books of fairy tales. She was a small, delicately boned woman, with a mass of glinting, fair hair and near-sighted hazel eyes, but a certain resolute quality about her straight little figure made her less the princess of my fancies than an extremely capable second-in-command of a difficult household.

There is no doubt but that it was a difficult household. The clash between Latin and Scandinavian temperaments transformed the kitchen from time to time into a battlefield. Nana, betraying

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a stubborn childish jealousy, refused to co-operate; and my sister Evelyn exhibited from the beginning an overt suspicion of my stepmother's attempts to establish affection between them. On first hearing of my father's marriage, Evelyn had made no adverse comments, but joined in eagerly as we laid plans to welcome the newly wedded pair. On the day of their expected arrival, however, she rushed away, locking herself in her room and ignoring all entreaties to emerge until at last my father himself coaxed her out from behind the forlorn barricade of her confused loyalties.

This pathetic, small incident, though quickly finished, set the tone for a subsequent relationship which remained unalterably complex. Although they became good friends, my stepmother never completely succeeded in winning Evelyn's confidence.

The practical aspects of her character soon became apparent in the changes that took place little by little about the house, these changes also demonstrating the fact of her youth. Whereas my own mother belonged to the Edwardian era, Beatrice was closer to the post-war generation with its stress on women's emancipation, and this awareness of her new independence together with a crusading spirit made her impatient of anything, from personal behaviour to furniture, which might be redundant.

Wisely leaving aside for the time being the complicated problem of human relationship under her own roof, my stepmother went about changing the face of the house, while Nana, her lips set grimly, observed the transformation with glares of disapproval. The chintz ruffles of the living-room were the first to go, being replaced by simple washable slip-covers. The "Blue Boy" vanished from my wall, leaving me with no sense of loss, but when "The Horse Fair" also disappeared I raised my voice in protest and was given by way of compensation a small desk with a folding front, the key for which I promptly lost. With a certain naïve confidence in the integrity of my companions, I printed across the front in straggling letters, "PROPERTY OF FLORENCE HAYES TURNER. PRIVATE!! KEEP OUT!" forgetting that anyone could, as I did, resort to the



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use of a buttonhook or a nail-file in order to examine the desk's contents. These, I might add, were deeply secretive, being the results of my tentative excursions into literary creation, including an extraordinary story in pictures, in which I depicted the heroine as myself grown up with curls that flowed down my back to gather in a wild mass of pencilled lozenges about my feet. This idea was to vindicate a humiliation which I had suffered shortly after my mother's death, when in the barber shop of the Antlers Hotel my own curls had been rudely snipped off without warning to lie forlornly on the tiled floor while I gazed at them in shock, the tears spouting from my eyes. Later on, after the birth of my elder half-brother, David Bryant Turner Junior, I added, in one of the last drawings, a ballooning stomach to my heroine which for some obscure reason of guilt I immediately erased. Nevertheless, due either to the quality of my eraser, or to some vague wishful thinking, the outline of indicated pregnancy remained while above it the simpering face of my heroine (which I had copied from the photograph of a movie star) seemed to be giving a coy recognition to the dim symbol of her fecundity.

This questionable creative outburst, however, came later, for when my stepmother first arrived to live on Trinchera I was quite uneducated and it was due to her patient instruction through the winter evenings that both Evelyn and I were able to take our place in a Colorado Springs school the next year. Evelyn had already received some schooling in Denver, followed by the brief spell of teaching from our own mother, but I could only read, and the complications of arithmetic and spelling have never ceased to trip me up even as they then did.

We made quite an impressive gathering of pupils around the glass-topped dining-room table, a relic from the Denver house, for besides Evelyn and myself, Margaret Schoonover, Chick and the two elder Shannon girls had been invited to join us. The Schley boys were not a part of our circle of learning for they never spent the winters on Trinchera but attended a school for boys in Colorado Springs called St. Stephens, from which Turner wrote me he had learned to play chess.

My stepmother's energetic reforms were not confined to the furniture or the backward state of our intellectual development. With John Roybal's help she planted a flower garden which flourished year after year, making a brilliant splash of colour against the white background of the house. She had a strong sense of beauty which she shared with my father, but where his feelings often lay too deep for expression, Beatrice would be driven by a restless need for corroboration as though she felt the appreciation of beauty was not enough in itself but must be seen as a projection of personality.

One wonderful fall afternoon when the lower slopes of the mountains were already vividly coloured by the gold, crimson and russet of changing foliage and new snow glittered on the high peaks, Margaret Schoonover and I accompanied my stepmother to Fort Garland to buy a new pair of boots for me. Beatrice drove carefully, sitting very straight behind the wheel of the big car. She was dressed in a tweed skirt and a plain cotton blouse while a hideous felt sport hat obliterated her bright hair. Everything she wore was inevitably chosen with an eye for simplicity, but her clothes were always of the best material and came from New York's most expensive shops. It was her somewhat snobbish belief that nothing purchased locally or even in Colorado Springs could compare with what was to be found in the East. As a result, my own peculiar costume of middy blouse and bloomers now arrived from a shop called de Pinna in New York, looking, as far as I could see, exactly like the ones I had worn before, although no doubt the price-tag blatantly asserted the difference. This unnecessary expense stopped short at my feet since my stepmother's practical side recognised the absurdity of giving anyone who was as hard on shoe-leather as I an expensive pair of boots. Therefore, I continued to wear the sturdy, sub-toed boys' boots from Hoagland Brothers, their worn leather never quite free from a faint aroma of sagebrush mixed with manure. None of us wore low shoes since they would not have provided any protection against rattlesnakes. One birthday, my father had given me a pair of cowboy boots which I had chosen myself from a Sears Roebuck mail order catalogue, that

endlessly fascinating, monumental volume over which we would pore on rainy days and which was subsequently used either to decorate John Roybal's cabin or as toilet paper on one of our camping trips. (As connoisseurs we preferred Sears Roebuck to Montgomery Ward, although I feel now there was little to choose between them.) The cowboy boots were not a success when I found how difficult it was to walk about in them, and for most of the time I kept them in my cupboard, only wearing them when I wished to impress some innocent visitor from the East.

It has often puzzled me why my stepmother with her expensive tastes disliked it when my father, showing his own brand of snobbery, insisted on having her riding-boots made by the same man who made his—an agent of Maxwell's in London who came periodically to Colorado Springs for orders. Yet she maintained stoutly that it was an unnecessary extravagance even while continuing to send away for Evelyn's and my clothes, and later her own sons' small garments.

On the day we drove to Fort Garland I picked out my new boots carefully, choosing a pair which had metal hooks for the laces. This innovation was not one I had seriously considered until recently, but one of Beatrice's reforms had been to make us appear on time for breakfast or pay a forfeit of some kind, and I now realised the value of being able to lace up my boots quickly when the first chime of the gong summoned us from our rooms.

The boots were wonderfully comfortable and I wriggled my toes happily, thinking that I would test them that same afternoon to see if they were waterproof, as the label said they were. (I did test them, by wading through an irrigation ditch. The label, as usual, was wrong.)

“ Oh, dear, they're really very ugly, aren't they? Those bumps on the toes——” Beatrice sighed. “ But if they're comfortable——”

Mr. Hoagland looked at her gravely. “ She's got room to grow in them boots, Ma'am.”

The matter was decided. After collecting the mail, we set off for home, Margaret and I sucking wintergreen-flavoured Life Savers, which I considered privately to be a poor substitute for

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the opulent choice of sweets Mr. Hoagland would have given us. But my stepmother did not approve of our indiscriminate gluttony, explaining that it caused indigestion and pimples and was generally bad for our teeth. Fortunately, I liked wintergreen and was able to accept the loss of my Oh Henrys, Baby Ruths and other delicious sticky concoctions with a minimum of disappointment.

We drove back in comparative silence. I do not think Beatrice ever enjoyed her excursions to Fort Garland, any more than she liked the occasional visits from the wives of local ranchers when they accompanied their husbands to Trinchera on business. For the sake of my father, she would make an enormous effort to entertain these women, showing them her garden, following them about as they inspected the house, smiling politely as they offered their comments on the furnishings, the plumbing or the electric light. Perhaps they sensed the underlying boredom which their presence gave her, or felt a hint of the laughter which would burst forth at their expense (for my stepmother could be extremely witty if a little unkind on these occasions) when they had left the house. Whatever it was, the visits were never a success and were not repeated. If the visitors were invited to lunch, things went more easily, for my father would be there, the warmth of his smile and his great good nature circulating around the table to include everyone.

"Pin back your ears," he would say with a chuckle, "and help yourselves."

The women would giggle and forget to extend their little fingers in a nervous imitation of what my father called *Ladies' Home Journal* manners, and even on an occasion when one of them inadvertently dumped her ice-cream in her finger-bowl my father merely laughed with such genuine amusement that the visitor joined in.

"Damn-fool things! Never saw any use in 'em. Let's get rid of them, shall we?"

This was hypocrisy on the part of my father, designed to cover his guest's embarrassment, for he was one of the few people I have known who used a finger-bowl without acting as though it

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were somehow a symbol of class distinction and not merely a bowl containing water in which one could wash one's fingers after eating an orange or gnawing a chicken leg. My father liked to eat with his fingers and we were all brought up to do the same thing, a habit which I have noticed is generally frowned upon, except in the Far East.

After the visitors had departed, my stepmother would disappear, but I knew she had gone to rest in the hammock which was slung between two trees at an angle so that whoever lay there could watch the drifting patterns of cloud-shadow across Mount Blanca's slopes or the blazing transition of sunset into night. It was as though she needed to be recharged spiritually after each of these nervous combats with people whom she appeared unable to understand. Even the mild excitement of an expedition to Fort Garland where she would be inevitably called upon to make small talk, which for anyone more gregarious or with nerves less exposed was merely a simple pleasure, seemed to tire her. As we turned off the highway on our return from my boot-buying excursion, she sent me a little smile in which I recognised the relief she was feeling that another small ordeal in her life had been successfully dealt with.

Beside me, Margaret Schoonover raised a pudgy hand to point ahead. “ Gee, Mizzis Turner, ain't them trees pretty? ”

She was looking at a grove of aspens where the gilded leaves quivered and spun under the light touch of a passing breeze.

My stepmother turned her head, her face radiant. “ Oh, Margaret, you do notice beauty, don't you? ”

Margaret looked startled, then embarrassed, then, as an expression of smug satisfaction appeared on her pale face, I knew with a stab of dislike that she had decided to exploit her moment of triumph.

“ Oh, I sure do, Mizzis Turner. I just love pretty things. ”

I glared at my companion, feeling humiliated, but my stepmother continued to smile, pointing at the passing landscape and talking eagerly as though Margaret's words had released her from some inner pressure. A little later she began to tell us a story which lasted until we reached the house.

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This gift for story-telling gave me many hours of pleasure, for my stepmother possessed a delicate fantasy, alive with images in miniature which were a child's delight. She also read to me a great deal from both the classics and poetry and encouraged me with my own weak talents. Finding me sadly lacking in any kind of domestic training, she attempted to teach me to sew, and I spent unhappy hours laboriously hemming dish-towels, my needle ploughing through the cloth in great, uneven stitches, dragging behind it a thread that grew more grey and sweaty with every stitch. Eventually, this particular effort was dropped, for I was far more adept at shifting forkfuls of manure-filled straw from a stall than I was at using a needle.

One of the more difficult ordeals to which Beatrice was subjected from time to time was the arrival for a visit of some of my own mother's friends. Not only did they belong to an older generation, but she must have been acutely aware that they were subjecting her to a comparison with her predecessor even though they concealed any sign of this by a coating of polite, social varnish. The ladies, none of them very active or inclined towards outdoor sports, remained inside most of the day, playing bridge, mah jongg or Russian bank for high stakes. If they did venture out of doors, it was only to wander a few hundred yards down the lane, their eyes raised a little fearfully towards the mountains.

"My dear," they would say, "how can you stand it? It's so big! Don't you get *lonely*?"

They seemed to feel better when settled comfortably in deck-chairs by the front door, knitting on their laps, the smoke from their cigarettes mingling with their vapid chatter. Sometimes Aunt Edith would appear round the corner of the house to join them, walking carefully (for she had a weak heart), her two small, blustering Sealyham dogs at her heels. With her arrival, the atmosphere would lighten perceptibly. My stepmother was not addicted to gossip, and since the talk would often concern the activities of people about whom she knew little, there would usually be a feeling of strain in the air. Aunt Edith, however, had the same quality of generous good nature as my father, and the visitors would welcome her with genuine pleasure, not only

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liking her for herself, but accepting her presence as a balance between my stepmother's occasional awkward silence and their own slight discomfort.

The cowhands, riding by, would throw quick looks of astonishment at the chattering, idle group by the house, and from my place on the grass beside Aunt Edith I would catch sight of the Schoonover children, mouths sagging open, as they stared in fascination from behind a tree trunk.

Visiting husbands presented less of a problem for they could be counted on to fish most of the day, returning towards sunset, flushed and satisfied, their creels full of trout. Their wives, throwing off a mounting boredom, greeted them with cries of relief, and the ceremony of the evening would begin.

Throughout the house, pipes gurgled and groaned from running bath-water; the Delco's engine popped crossly in the still darkness outside; in the kitchen I hung about inhaling the exquisite fragrance of roast beef or chicken, while Selma, the cook of the moment, yelled at me to get out of the way. In the living room my father, wearing an unaccustomed tweed jacket, shook up cocktails in a frosted, silver jug, his smiling, fresh-coloured face showing nothing of the weariness he must have been feeling after a long day divided between his desk and working in the hay-meadows. I think he enjoyed these occasions, for he was by nature convivial and made an excellent host. Beatrice, frowning slightly as she peered near-sightedly at the table decorations, looked to me ravishingly pretty in a light dress which she had donned as a sop to her guests, who liked changing for dinner.

“ Nothing elaborate, my dear. But I do think it's so civilised to change, don't you? ”

These remarks, spoken by a fashionable lady from Denver, were the preliminary to an evening which none of us ever forgot. We became accustomed, after a series of these visits, to our guests' habit of changing for dinner, even though it only meant substituting one dress for another, or the men donning ties and jackets. But none of us had expected such an apparition as Mrs. Hungerford Smith on the night when she swept into the living-

room at Trinchera wearing full evening dress with a wreath of silver leaves resting on her hair. Even the glass eyes of the buffalo, elk and deer heads seemed lit with astonishment, while the mountain lion's perpetual grin appeared less defensive than filled with a malicious humour.

My father, his eyes twinkling with amusement, complimented Mrs. Smith on her appearance, and the evening began comfortably with several rounds of cocktails, so that by the time everyone sat down to dinner the atmosphere was as light as a soufflé. Two hundred yards away, within the circle of light cast by our windows, a group of horses munched wild grass, and I heard the dogs barking angrily as a coyote raised his voice on the first wailing note of his hunting song. I visualised briefly the foothills where he roamed, their gullies deep in night and silence. But inside, the piñon logs snapped on the hearths, the air was scented with perfume, cigarettes and wine, and Mrs. Hungerford Smith chatted as gaily as though her limousine was waiting to take her at the end of dinner to a night club, a ballroom or a gambling casino.

The pantry door swung open and I tore my fascinated gaze from Mrs. Smith's gleaming *décolletage* and silver foliage, to watch hungrily as Roy Schoonover's wife, her face strained and anxious, began setting out plates of soup from a large tray with hands that trembled slightly. The door opened again, this time to reveal a young Mexican girl, a relative of John Roybal, who had been hired for the occasion. She held the second tray of soup rigidly in front of her and her wide dark eyes stared about the room in a kind of fearful awe. Moving forward with a hesitant step, she stopped short while an expression of stunned amazement came over her face and we realised that the object of her astounded attention was Mrs. Hungerford Smith. The tray tilted slowly, six plates of soup crashed to the floor, and the girl, with a whoop of mirth, clapped her hand to her face and fled while the pantry door whined irritably in the abrupt silence that followed her departure.

For a moment we were all too surprised to speak, then Mrs. Hungerford Smith, with the composure worthy of a duchess,



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shrugged one bare shoulder in a gesture that seemed to say, “ These natives! My dear, what can you expect? ” and went on talking to my father, her calm voice not quite overriding the sounds of continuing pleasure from the kitchen or the strangled snorts which issued from my sister and me. As a first lesson in social *savoir faire*, Mrs. Hungerford Smith’s behaviour seemed to us far less noteworthy than the Mexican girl’s impulsive reaction.

The evening ended with music and dancing, first to contemporary popular tunes like “ Barney Google,” “ Yes, We have no Bananas ” or “ It’s Three o’clock in the Morning,” played on the victrola, which had to be wound at the end of each record. But later, after I had gone to bed, I heard them all singing “ Beautiful Lady ” and knew that Aunt Edith would be accompanying on the piano. Just before I dropped off to sleep, my father began one of his favourite songs, and the guests took it up in varying keys with alcoholic enthusiasm. “ Every little moment,” they bellowed, “ has a meaning all its own.” I did not think of it at the time, but now it seems to me that the words formed a peculiarly fitting conclusion to the events of the evening.

Being a regular visitor to The Farm, I would often be invited to stay to a meal, and my father too would frequently end a business conference with Harve by staying to lunch with the Shannons. I enjoyed these occasions enormously, for I was never happier than when singled out to be my father’s companion of the moment. Also I liked the novelty of the Shannons’ long table with its heavy white cloth, brought out for the benefit of my father, the huddle of glass cruets at each end and the inevitable bottle of tomato ketchup which Harve spread thickly over everything he ate. When I lunched alone with the Shannons there was never any pretence, and we used the same gravy-stained, checked cloth from which the cowhands had taken their meal earlier. But because my father was “ the boss,” Mrs. Shannon would go to considerable lengths to see that the meal was special, according to her standards, and would always begin by offering us a concoction of lettuce, pineapple, canned, sliced

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peaches and condensed whipped cream, topped by a maraschino cherry.

I was fully aware of my father's opinions concerning what he called, in common with anything he considered an affectation, *Ladies' Home Journal* food. But I also knew that there was never the slightest possibility of his betraying his dislike if it meant hurting Mrs. Shannon's feelings. He would therefore always eat his way through the horrid mixture, while I followed suit, finding the dish less palatable than interesting to dissect. The next course would be fried steak and potatoes with hot bread, the whole being washed down by strong, black coffee. Afterwards, when we were alone, my father would pat his stomach, smiling at me.

"Well, butcher-bird, that was quite a gastronomical adventure."

Then he would rub his nose thoughtfully. "A dozen milk-cows and they used canned cream. Isn't it marvellous?"

That, however, was the extent of his criticism, and I have no doubt that Mrs. Shannon was convinced that my father had a particular liking for her culinary effort, for it seldom failed to appear. Once, taking her by surprise, we arrived with Harve for lunch to find the meal would consist of meat cooked Mexican fashion, spicy and burning with red peppers and chile. Mrs. Shannon was flustered and apologetic, but my father, concealing his relief, announced with honesty that he liked Mexican cooking. He turned to me for concurrence but I was unable to give it to him for I had just bitten into a chile which was so hot that my mouth was suddenly ablaze while the tears rose to my eyes.

One Sunday I drove down to The Farm with my father and stepmother to inspect two buffalo calves which had been made orphans through circumstances which I have now forgotten, but which were being raised by a kindly, if somewhat puzzled, Holstein cow. Except for a certain leisure, breakfast, consisting of home-made pork sausages and pancakes, being served an hour later, Sundays for my family were no different from any other day. Since the men were naturally free, as a rule my father reserved that time for working at his desk, but there was usually

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some period during the day when he would allow himself the luxury of a ride with us or some excursion like the one we made to see the buffalo calves.

“ Wait and see. You’ll find there’ll be some kind of business you’ll have to talk over with Harve,” said my stepmother accusingly.

My father denied it, as he always did, but when we had finished our scrutiny of the disarming, woolly, brown calves and were walking back to the car, I noticed that he and Harve had stayed behind, assuming the pose which indicated to us that some important matter was about to be discussed. My father had sunk down to balance on his hands, the classic position of a Westerner enacting business, while Harve, who would undoubtedly have joined him if he had not been so fat, was leaning against the side of the barn, a piece of hay, his usual prop at these moments, protruding from his mouth.

My stepmother sighed as she climbed into the car. “ We’ll just have to wait. Heaven knows how long they’ll be.”

Mrs. Shannon emerged from the house, followed by her three daughters, whom I welcomed with pleasure. Because it was Sunday they were wearing ruffy sateen dresses and I stared at them admiringly.

“ Now, Mizzis Turner, won’t you just come and set for a while? You know what men are when they get together. Just talk, talk, talk.”

My stepmother hesitated briefly, then shook her head, smiling politely. “ No, thank you, Mrs. Shannon, I’ll wait here. I don’t expect my husband will be long.”

It was not meant as a snub, but Mrs. Shannon’s wide, pretty face reddened a little. For a minute, observing the formalities, she remained by the car, chatting nervously about the buffalo calves. But the talk soon dwindled away for, as was so often the case on these meetings, there seemed no point of contact.

“ Well, if you’ll just excuse me—

The screen door banged behind Mrs. Shannon, but the three, girls, Nanalee, Bobbie and Blondie, climbed into the back seat of the car with me. They were all three plump girls and we

wedged ourselves in, squealing and pushing until Blondie shrieked, "Quit it now, you'll spoil my new dress."

She smoothed her pink ruffles gloatingly. "Ain't it pretty? Mamma made it for me out of a pattern."

"Don't say 'ain't,' Blondie. You know what Mamma told you."

Nanalee spoke placidly. She was a big, cheerful girl with her father's wide smile, but her eyes were dark and there was an air of intelligence about her that used to make my father say, "Nanalee will amount to something."

"Do you like to read, Blondie? I know Nanalee does."

My stepmother turned to smile at us.

Blondie looked blank, then, as she opened her mouth to reply, there came a patter like heavy rain on the roof of the car, accompanied by a rank smell, and Bobbie, the quiet, self-effacing sister, said, "The goats! They must have jumped up from the back!"

It took us fifteen minutes to lure the goats down, during which the paintwork of the car suffered considerably. Just as we had finished shooing them off, Mary, the tame deer, drifted around the corner of the house and I rushed to pet her while she pushed me with a nose like damp, black rubber, her big ears cocked inquiringly, her eyes liquid and unafraid.

"She wants chocolate! We've got some in the car."

My stepmother obligingly proffered the bar of milk chocolate, which Mary ate daintily, her long, grey tongue licking around eagerly for any traces of the sweet, sticky mess. I looked at her wistfully, for I could never quite get used to the fact that Mary belonged to the Shannons and not to me.

"Isn't she a darling?"

"She's a lovely creature," said my stepmother.

"She's awful dirty and she's got fleas!"

Blondie hopped on one leg as she offered this information, her tightly curled flaxen hair bouncing with the movement. Still hopping, she arrived by the side of the car and jumped on to the running-board, surveying my stepmother carefully from big, shallow blue eyes.

Beatrice returned the look smilingly. Her slim hands were

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folded calmly, her slight body leaning against the seat in the consciously relaxed manner she employed while waiting for my father.

Blondie gave a little wriggle, shaking the ruffles violently on her fat little buttocks. She sniffed.

“ Say, Mizzis Turner. How come you dress so plain? ”

An expression of amused astonishment crossed my step-mother's face and she glanced down in bewilderment at her slender legs in their boots and whipcord breeches.

“ Why, I—I—I— ”

“ You always dress plain, even on Sundays—ouch! Quit it! ”

Nanalee, looking embarrassed, had given her sister a sudden jab in the back.

“ You just shut your mouth, you little stupid! Mizzis Turner goes riding! That's what! ”

• *Savoir faire* again! and vindication for Mrs. Hungerford Smith from an unsuspected and unsuspecting quarter. Blondie retreated, her face pink and sulky, and at the same moment I saw with relief that my father and Harve Shannon were walking towards the car.

## IX

### COLORADO SPRINGS AND TUTORS

MY EDUCATION began in earnest when at the age of eight I became a pupil at the Cheyenne Public School in Colorado Springs. I went under protest, for it seemed to me, cruelly unfair that I should be forced to abandon Trinchera during the winter and early spring when some of the more absorbing events of our ranch existence took place. We lived in a house on a wide, tree-shaded street in Broadmoor, not far from Aunt Edith. It was a pleasant house, with big square rooms and a large garden and had been a gift to my stepmother from her father, Edward Wetmore. I had a desultory affection for it, based on familiarity, but it was never home to me in the profound sense that Trinchera was. The months from October to June were for me mainly a period of waiting until I could once again return to the ranch, which, next to my father, occupied my thoughts constantly. To be sure, there was a certain elasticity about our attendance at school, since with the connivance of both the weather and my father's easy-going nature, we were often able to slice off whole weeks at both ends of the winter, a habit which could scarcely have helped our education but which added greatly to our happiness.

One fall afternoon on Trinchera, we walked back from the stables through a chill dusk. It was the second of October and already Evelyn and I were late in returning to school. The sky was heavily overcast and my father glanced up with a worried expression.

"Smells like snow," he said.

Before we had reached the house, large flakes began to fall lazily, sending my puppy, Rags, into a frenzy as he leaped and snapped in a fruitless attempt to catch them. By nightfall it was

snowing heavily and my father stood by the window, his eyes anxious. The cattle were still on the ranges and if the snow continued, their grass would be covered too deeply for them to reach by pawing and they would starve. His anxiety was justified, for by morning the snow lay four feet deep, the fence posts were covered and paths had to be dug before we could force open the house doors. We ran about in the cold tunnels, screeching with pleasure, or floundered out of our depth into the enticing expanse of trackless snow. Although there was nothing to be done at the moment about the cattle, the immediate problems were numerous, for the sheep had been buried in their corral, the pedigreed mares and foals were waiting to be released from the bed of the stream where they had taken refuge, the chickens and turkeys must be dug out and fed—there were a dozen or more exciting situations which demanded my attendance. Oh, that it might last for ever! Any eventuality of the beef cattle starving or my father facing financial ruin that year made little impression on me when compared to this unforeseen extension of my liberty. Fortunately, I was saved from subsequent remorse when the sun came out, at noon, blazing down so that we had to shut our eyes against the reflected glare. By next morning the snow had melted enough to make us realise that the cattle would be safe, and like a song of triumph the streams roared with the muddy surcharge from fast dissolving snow-banks. Here and there the ravines were still deep in drifts, and Harve, riding with my father and me into the lower meadows to see how the registered herd had withstood the blizzard, vanished with his horse nearly out of sight, mistaking the smooth surface for the shallower depths of an irrigation ditch. With the help of a rope and his own horse, my father managed to drag both Harve and his mount to safety, while I watched in fearful delight.

Alas, a week later I was back in school, surrounded by mixed smells of chalk, unwashed feet and stale tomato soup from the school kitchen, the usual accompaniment to our lunch of sandwiches and cookies.

One winter, Harve shot a bear and sent the steaks to us in Colorado Springs, and filled with pride and self-importance I

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took some bear-meat sandwiches to school, offering them around to my companions.

"It's bear meat," I announced, and waited for the exclamations of wondering surprise.

To my hurt astonishment, I was not believed.

"Yah, so's your old 'man!" they said, annihilating me with the current popular statement of profound contempt.

I wandered moodily to the playground, tried the sandwiches myself through the stout barriers of gold bands encircling my teeth, met with resistance (for bear meat is tough) and finally buried the whole lot under a pine tree, pondering sadly the while on this my first lesson in universal scepticism.

The winter months dragged by, lightened from time to time by letters from my father which he composed in verse and to which I was adjured to reply in kind. Fortunately, none of my letters have survived, but the following are representative of my father's creative efforts, which I found, and still find, beyond criticism.

Trinchera Ranch  
December 10, 1920

Dearest Florence:

I am one spasm ahead of you. You will have to hurry. Here is my second spasm. Entitled:

### WHEN DAD DOES THE COOKING

A coyote who stood on the top of a hill  
From an old dead cow had taken his fill.  
Long he gazed in the valley that lay at his feet  
Where dwelt many people who owned chicken and sheep.  
He longed for a change & the delicious fresh flavor  
Of puppy dogs meat, pet cat & things that savor  
Of home cooking, panofkes & all kinds of things  
That out from the kitchen a cook always flings.

But he heaved a great sigh & turned away  
And had you been there you would have heard him say  
"I would take a chance on those puppies today  
But the boss does the cooking, so it's mine for the day."



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When next the muse moves me I am thinking of committing to paper certain conditions of life at the present time entitled probably "Batching on the Old Camp Grounds." Hurry up and send me your contribution.

Lovingly,  
Dad.

Trinchera Ranch  
(no date)

### THE TRAGEDY OF A BUTTERFLY

(Being a true story; poor thing)

A butterfly crawled from his warm cocoon  
Because the sky was blue & the sun at noon  
Warned his body, & a kindling desire  
To see the world turned him from grub to flier.  
But like all young creatures that see things glitter  
And are drawn by impulse to experience bitter  
He flew for a day in the sun-lit zone  
But that night while it set he expired alone.

By your devoted admirer & Dad.  
It's your turn now.

Other letters, less poetical, like the following, gave the information which he knew I longed for.

Trinchera Ranch  
Fort Garland  
Colorado  
(no date)

Dearest Cowboy Daughter:

Your letter came amidst the finest kind of weather which has continued beautiful most of the time until this afternoon when the wind began to blow & the snow to fall. We have some sick calves that we have given castor oil to & put out in the sheds at the ranch. The cows are still in the hills but this wind may bring many down. The horses are all well & your mare is fat & saucy. The black & white colt grows fast and is getting quite gentle. The pups grow in size & attractiveness & I know you will like them. Rags looks like a poorly stuffed dog in a toy shop. He is getting better natured. . . . I hope you are practicing your music lessons. . . .

Much love & a kiss, Your Dad.

## DAYS OF ELK AND BUFFALO

During this same winter my father was called upon to act the part of midwife, although he did not tell me about the incident until months later. The snow had continued to fall heavily, and the road to Fort Garland was impassable, except by horse-drawn sledge, when Harve Shannon arrived late one night to say that his wife was in the throes of a premature labour. Would my father come? for it was out of the question to bring the doctor from Alamosa. A few hours later, by the light of a kerosene lamp, my father delivered Mrs. Shannon of a stillborn son, and early next morning he and Harve rode up into the foothills to bury the baby under a group of piñon trees. I heard the story with awe, and, compelled by a kind of morbid pity, paid several visits to the small mound on the hillside. Even after there was little left to indicate its presence, I seldom forgot, when riding by, to throw a quick glance towards the unmarked grave, identifying it in my mind with an ambiguous sense of loss.

At the end of one Easter holiday I persuaded my father to take me back with him to the ranch in time for the lambing season. What excitement there was attached to those stolen, illicit journeys! We never knew until we got there if La Veta Pass would be snowed up, or what perils in the way of washed-out bridges, fallen trees or mud-holes lay in wait for us beyond Pueblo. These uncertainties, however, merely added to my pleasure, for I felt my father to be equal to any emergency.

Trinchera would be waiting, its huge silence deepened by the snow that covered peak and foothill, thinning only in the bottom-land where we could see deer which, driven down by hunger from the hills, came to browse along the edge of the meadows. The enormous loneliness of the mountains might have evoked in me a certain fear, but my father had taught me to read signs in the snow which brought the desolation to active life. On our walks together he would point to where a mouse had met its death by the beak and claws of an owl, all that remained being a small, regurgitated ball of hair. Or he would show me, by the frenzied pattern of struggle in the snow and a tuft of fur caught in the barbed wire, how a coyote had killed a jack-rabbit, or, indicating the miniature tracks of a mole, showing between them

## COLORADO SPRINGS AND TUTOR

the long line where it had dragged its tail, he would chuckle and say, "That little fellow must have frozen his behind."

It was the time of year when we made war against the coyotes, for, poor beasts, the penalty of their hunger which led them to destroy our calves and sheep and even on occasions a late-born foal must by the law of the land be death. This particular year, they had incriminated themselves more strongly than ever, for a pack of them had stampeded a herd of terrified sheep, sending their prey in a mad flight of hysterical fear over the edge of a steep cliff to their death, hundreds of feet below. As a result, revenge by gun and trap became extensive, and there were many hides nailed flat along the ice-house wall to cure.

With that strange perversity which so often afflicts people who live close to animals, I loved the coyotes, even while I waited with a kind of blood-lust for the moment of their death. To see one of these creatures, fleeing like a sudden puff of grey-brown smoke across the white surface of a snow-covered field, provoked an excitement to which the sound of the gun-shot merely added piquancy, for I am certain there was no hatred in the feeling, or even one of vindication. In fact, I preferred the coyotes as animals to the sheep and would have missed their haunting voices and the sensation of tense expectancy that their unseen presence gave me.

Nevertheless, I joined in the unhappy conflict, was occasionally allowed to take a shot at one myself, which I always missed, and went with my father regularly to visit the traps set out about the carcase of a dead horse. This method of destruction was one with which I found it most difficult to come to terms, particularly after the time we found a coyote which had nearly freed itself by chewing through a leg. It lay snarling at us, its body curled in the hollow formed by the bare, springing ribs of the dead horse, yellow eyes glaring with hatred, and I stared in horror, feeling the tears spring to my own eyes. A second later there came a shot from my father's ending the misery which we had ourselves brought about.

My father stood looking down at the dead coyote. "The plucky little beggar," he said. "I feel ashamed."

But the war continued and night after night there was a body strung up by the paws in the engine-room of the garage, its shadow moving eerily on the wall in time to the swaying of the single, naked electric-light bulb on its long cord.

In the stables, like a natural counterpoint to this fugue of death, the lambing season was at its height. My father, Roy Schoonover and Chick would "spell" one another through the long night, helping the ewes when necessary in their delivery, and sometimes I would be allowed to stay up until ten o'clock, sitting by the stove in the tack-room, my eyes heavy in the dim light of the storm-lantern, while down below the sheep would bleat and whimper, rustling the thick straw as they moved in their preliminary birth-pangs.

But even my father's kindly indulgence could be extended only so long, and soon I was back in Colorado Springs, having made the return journey by train. The classroom seemed stuffier than ever and I turned the pages of my "Mother Tongue" grammar book gloomily, or fought back my hatred of arithmetic problems in which people, carrying a firmly stated number of apples, ran unreasonably from one place to another at a speed which I was supposed to know, but never did, unless I looked up the answers at the end of the book.

It would be incorrect, however, to imagine that all my life at Colorado Springs was spent in wishing myself on Trinchera. This desire took precedence, but at the same time I led a happy enough life in which certain colourful incidents from time to time added to the collection of memories on which I could later draw.

One winter, a wealthy and publicity-minded friend of my family, Mr. Spencer Penrose, imported an elephant named Tessie to live in Broadmoor. She was housed in the stables adjacent to the Broadmoor Hotel, a mere block from our house. We would visit her occasionally, watching her pityingly as she stood weaving her great head mournfully from side to side, her little eyes fixed unhappily on some middle distance. Sometimes, walking back from school, we would see the marks of her feet in the snow, as though someone had set down a large bucket at regular intervals,

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or a startlingly huge pile of dung. Since they were seldom cleared away immediately, these piles would freeze overnight to the consistency of granite, and on one memorable occasion the postman, skidding on the unpaved road, crashed against an unyielding mound with such force that he bent his mudguard. Except for a daily walk for exercise, Tessie languished miserably in her stall throughout the winter, but when summer came, Mr. Penrose conceived an idea which even as a publicity stunt was questionable.

That summer Jack Dempsey arrived in Colorado Springs for a season of training and I had occasionally seen him panting along the road above the golf course dressed in shorts and a voluminous sweat-shirt. The presence of such a celebrity seems to have acted on our publicity-minded friend like champagne on an empty stomach, for he conceived the idea that Mr. Dempsey should attend the first polo match of the season, mounted on Tessie, from whose broad back he would throw in the ball for the opening play. We had already left for Trinchera when the plan was executed, but we heard that the results were disastrous. At the sight of Tessie, the polo ponies were seized with a collective hysteria so that they stampeded *en masse* from the field, leaving the bewildered Tessie and her rider to themselves.

It was no doubt the sight of my report card plus our general primitive behaviour that finally decided Aunt Edith and my father to employ a tutor during the summers. This decision coincided with the departure of Nana from my life, an occurrence which left me with such a sense of loss that it was weeks before I could fall asleep without weeping into my pillow. Even now, the sound of crickets in a summer's dusk will recall those lonely moments when I experienced a grief I could not understand.

But it was obvious that a change must be made. My little half-brother David was nearly a year old, another baby was on the way, and my stepmother must have found Nana's over-indulgent and dated ideas of bringing up children in direct opposition to her own. Furthermore, at ten, I was scarcely in need of a nurse and Evelyn was to go that fall to a girls' boarding-school in Connecticut, called Westover. I saw Nana only once more

after that when, in 1926, my father and I made a trip to Denver, visiting my mother's grave and calling at a house where Nana was then employed. I remember feeling embarrassed by the tears in her eyes and puzzled by my own curious mixture of emotions, but now I wish that the circumstances of my subsequent life had not prevented me from losing sight of this woman who contributed so generously and lovingly to my early years.

The Schléy boys had the equivalent of Nana in their French governess, Mademoiselle Duvanel, who taught us all to say laboriously, "passez le pain" or "donnez-moi le beurre, si'l vous plaît" at table. The fact of their making up a verse which they would shout at her, "Mademoiselle Duvanel, fell down a well and went to Hell!" did not obviate their affection for her, and my cousin Grant continued to look after his governess for as long as he lived.

Mademoiselle also departed that summer and we waited with a certain amount of resentment for the first tutor to arrive at Trinchera.

It was late July when he came. Aunt Edith, after our brief philandering with the Devil, had attempted to canalise our energies into something useful, and we had been put to work cutting back the thick brush along the stream behind her house. We also helped to construct a log guest-cabin and a roomy dormitory which Aunt Edith had built in the woods next to the house for the overflow of children who constantly visited the ranch. Turner and I were still smarting from a humiliation we had received a week or so before when we failed miserably in our first business venture.

Turner had greeted me one morning waving a magazine called *Popular Mechanics*, in which an advertisement stated that by selling two dozen knife and scissor sharpeners at twenty-five cents each we would become the joyous recipients of a box of magic tricks. We decided at once to send away for the sharpeners, keeping our negotiations a secret and waiting expectantly for each arrival of the mail from Fort Garland. When the box of sharpeners finally appeared we set about eagerly on our pursuit of customers, meeting almost immediately with what should have been obvious

to us from the beginning. There were no customers, at least after Mrs. Glyn and our cook Selma had been grudgingly persuaded to invest in two of the gadgets. Mrs. Glyn put her sharpener philosophically away in a drawer, but Selma, after trying hers, announced coldly that it didn't "work good," and was "nothing but junk."

Turner and I met for a gloomy consultation behind the garage.

"Mr. Hoagland might sell them for us," said Turner hopefully.

I considered the possibility for a moment, then shook my head.

"No, because if he did, we'd have to give him the box of magic."

The affair had reached this mournful state when Aunt Edith discovered what we were doing and, proclaiming the whole affair to be a swindle, made us pack up the remaining twenty-two sharpeners and send them back to their makers. We considered that we had been hardly treated, particularly as we had not even been allowed to keep the fifty cents, which were returned to Mrs. Glyn and Selma. Aunt Edith was in a somewhat militant state of mind that summer, but with youthful ego we failed to connect this with our own uncertain behaviour, and her next disciplinary action took us by surprise.

Turner and I read copiously and our book of the moment, which we shared between us, taking turns at reading it chapter by chapter, was Zane Grey's *Wild Fire*. We already knew from Grant that there was a section near the end of the book, calculated to appeal to our prurency, where a girl is tied naked to Wild Fire's back (Wild Fire was a horse) and we had just reached this point, curled up on the couch in front of the fire (the evenings on Trinchera were often cold, even in midsummer), when Aunt Edith came into the room.

"How can you read such rubbish," she said, and picking up the book she threw it into the fire while we stared in amazement.

"There," she went on calmly, poking the curling pages, so that they would burn more quickly. "That's where it belongs."

The gesture impressed us, but not enough, for a week later we were poring over Somerset Maugham's *Painted Veil* which I had

found under the cushions of our couch where my stepmother had hidden it.

If we were failures in our attempt to become middlemen, we did better as wage-earners, for Aunt Edith, perhaps regretting her harsh decree over the book, and feeling sorry for our lack of success with the sharpeners, decided to pay us ten cents an hour for our brush-cutting. She also gave us additional work by hiring us to dig up the loco-weed which grew abundantly among the sagebrush near the house. I would dig up the thick clusters of white and purple blossom with its silvery-green leaves, thinking what a pity it was that such an attractive flower could be so poisonous. But we were all familiar with the sight of a locoed horse or cow, my own Welsh mare, Queenie, having fallen victim to the horrid weed. Once acquiring a taste for loco, animals refuse all other food and will starve to death, or if they are in an advanced state of drug-taking (for eating loco amounts to the same thing as becoming a drug addict) will hurl themselves against a barbed-wire fence time and time again until they are horribly torn and bleeding in an effort to satisfy their craving. They lose all sense of balance and perspective and will weave about a field drunkenly, leaping suddenly sideways to fall with a heartrending thud as though they had suddenly lost the use of their legs. Unless the disease is arrested in its early stages, the final result is a kind of corrosive insanity, while at the same time the muscles shrivel and the animal loses his sight and hearing, and must be shot in order to end his suffering.

Queenie, fortunately, was saved early but she remained ever afterwards in a semi-cured state and was not really a safe horse to ride. Nevertheless, I continued to ride her, for I learned to watch for her sudden startled shying, as though she had caught sight, by some inward vision, of a fantasy creature which did not please her, and I grew accustomed to the habit she had of jumping a bridge instead of walking across it.

This war on loco was continuous, and since the weed flourished with or without rain, a drought became one of our most dreaded enemies, for it meant the grass would fail and the livestock might easily turn to eating loco when they grew hungry. 1



The first tutor arrived by the morning train on a day when I had gone to San Luis, riding on top of a pile of sacks containing wheat which would be ground into flour at the San Luis mill. Roy Schoonover drove the truck, a Dodge which we had christened "Sunshine," and which by the boisterously sturdy manner in which it charged over sagebrush and almost impassable roads had acquired a definite personality. Sunshine had taken the place of the Model T station-wagon, which had been turned over to Harve Shannon, who with his rapidly increasing girth was now more comfortable on a driver's seat than in a saddle.

When we returned from San Luis in the afternoon I found Turner waiting for me by the gate, having observed our progress by the cloud of dust trailing us over the thank-you-ma'ams.

"Has he come?"

Turner nodded gloomily. "Yes, and he looks like an egg."

It was true. The tutor, whom I shall call Mr. Manning because I have forgotten his real name, had an egg-shaped skull against which his mousy hair was thinly plastered. He wore round spectacles and his small mouth was constantly puckered in an expression of disapproval. We all took an instant dislike to him, and although Aunt Edith treated him with kindly politeness, I occasionally saw her watching him with a slightly worried air. He played the musical saw, drawing forth the whining, over-sweet tones with the concentration of a virtuoso, his head bowed, while we squirmed and avoided one another's eyes. At lessons, which were held in the guest-cabin where he also slept, he maintained a stern discipline, barking at us, or smiling sarcastically when we showed our ignorance. It was not long before we struck back, meeting to lay our plans in a secret grove of willows north of the creek. I have sometimes wondered if we were unconsciously emulating my father in our treatment of these unhappy tutors, for we knew by heart the story of his own behaviour with the tutor in Montezuma. Whatever it was, our department was not creditable, for we put horsehair, cut fine, into his bed, slipped slices of strong cheese between his pillow and pillow-case and in a grand finale, pretending that we were playing Indians, tied him

securely to a tree in the woods, where we left him to struggle for nearly two hours.

Needless to say, this final effort produced the longed-for result. Mr. Manning, after a talk with Aunt Edith from which we were naturally excluded, packed his bag and left on the evening train. Our jubilation was somewhat mitigated by a severe reprimand and the knowledge that another tutor would be arriving as soon as he could be found.

Tutor number two was Mr. Hodge, who closely resembled the advertisements of young men who have just completed a course in physical development. He had large white teeth which he exhibited constantly, and waving golden hair which he would toss back from his forehead like a pony shaking its mane. His exhibition was not limited to his teeth, for he delighted in taking off his shirt and would stalk about the place half-nude, flexing his muscles happily, while the boys stared admiringly. His manner alternated between a great heartiness and a kind of hushed coyness which he would assume when showing us a flower or pointing out some bit of scenic beauty which we had already noticed ourselves. He took us for nature walks, which I found redundant, and at lessons would stand at one or other of the boys' shoulders, his hand resting lightly on their bent heads. He did not care for me and I disliked him more and more, feeling a sense of betrayal when even Turner evinced a tendency to stay with Mr. Hodge when he might have been with me.

To my surprise, I found an unexpected ally in Aunt Edith. Mr. Hodge had been with us about two weeks when one afternoon I stood on the porch of the Schley house watching the tutor, his bronzed torso gleaming handsomely in the sun as he chopped wood and called in ringing, jovial tones to the boys as they helped him to stack the logs. A little distance away stood my sister and her friend Caroline, giggling together. I felt alone and unwanted and stared down miserably at my dirty boots. The screen door slammed and I looked up to see Aunt Edith standing beside me. She was looking at Mr. Hodge, her brow creased in an expression of puzzled irritation. Then she smacked her two hands together in a gesture of decision.

## COLORADO SPRINGS AND TUTORS

"No, I will not have it," she said, speaking to herself more than to me. "It's too disgusting. At least he must put on his shirt!"

I knew from the way she was watching the tutor that her irritation was not altogether to do with the tutor's lack of clothing. From then on he wore a shirt, but a certain antagonism between him and Aunt Edith began to make itself noticeable, for she would cut him short when he was speaking and avoided him except at meals. Yet he stayed on and I began to think that my only course was to accept him with the best grace I could muster, although I continued to nurse my jealousy in secret.

Then one August day, when we were riding with Mr. Hodge in the hills, Turner pulled his horse over close to mine.

"I don't like Mr. Hodge," he whispered, and my heart bounded with delight. "He pats me. I think he's wet!"

My dislike began to evaporate, and I looked at the tutor with forgiving eyes even while he suddenly broke into a canter, raising his voice in what I considered a fraudulent imitation of a cowboy riding herd. He rode badly, bouncing in the saddle, and by our critical standards broke every rule, since he would insist on galloping as we neared home, bringing in his horse to the stable in a lather of sweat which we had been taught by my father never to do. But the tide was turning and I followed obediently as he rode up a canyon and began to climb the bare ridge beyond. It was a clear, still day and suddenly Chal let out a shout, pointing ahead to where a feather of smoke rose slowly into the air.

"It's a fire. Quick! Let's go see!"

We found a small forest fire burning steadily in a clump of mountain ash. The flames were not yet very high, but the fire was creeping slowly towards a small, half-dead pine which would ignite like matchwood. Beyond was the dry bed of an old stream.

While we stared excitedly, Mr. Hodge apparently reached a decision.

"We must get help!" he said dramatically, tossing back his hair.

"Grant and Chal will come with me. You two stay here.

Don't touch anything, don't move from your horses. Understand! This may be serious—very serious."

They left in a clatter of sliding stones, and in the silence following their departure Turner and I listened to the whine and crackle of the burning brush, sniffing the sweet smell of hot, resinous wood and watching the smoke that rose straight up in the quiet air.

"I think it's going out," said Turner suddenly. "Look, there's practically no flame now."

He sounded disappointed.

"Let's go over, shall we?"

"But Mr. Hodge said——"

"Oh, pooh to old Hodge-podge. Come on."

He slid from his horse and I followed, delighted by Turner's defiance of the tutor's words.

There was still a thin line of flame low down, and Turner held a dry branch to it, watching curiously as the flame caught and burned. He held up his stick.

"Look, I've got a torch."

"Be careful, you'll set something else on fire."

He walked over toward the dead pine. "It wouldn't take much to light up that old tree, would it?"

"No—o——"

"Shall we?"

"We don't dare."

He held out the burning branch tentatively towards the yellow-brown pine-needles. With a whooshing sound and a roar, the fire caught, mounting rapidly, and the tree burst into golden flames. We held our breath in horror, then stared entranced, for it was beautiful; it was frightening; it was arson.

Behind us, one of the horses whinnied and we turned to see my father and Del Owens riding at a trot down the ridge. They did not waste words in greeting but set about stamping out the fire, dragging their slickers across the burning shrubs and throwing earth over the small tongues of flame. Soon there was nothing left but a faint smouldering line of ash.

My father looked up at the tree. "Nothing we can do about

that, but I think it will fall across that dry stream bed and burn itself out. Stand well back, now, in case it decides to fill this way."

We watched anxiously, fearing in our guilt that the worst would happen, but the tree crashed down on the side of the stream and we sighed in relief.

My father looked at us in a puzzled way.

"What are you two doing here? I thought Mr. Hodge was with you."

We explained in chorus, hiding the fact that we had disobeyed orders to such a shameful extent.

"The damn fool," said my father. "Why didn't he try to put the fire out instead of leaving you two here alone?"

Del stayed behind to watch that the tree would safely burn itself to ashes and we set off for home, chatting about the reasons for the fire, which my father thought might have been caused by the intense heat of the sun's rays reflecting on a metallized vein of rock.

Half-way home, we met Mr. Hodge and Roy Schoonover, riding at a gallop, their horses bathed in sweat.

"It's all right. The fire's out," said my father shortly. "But you shouldn't have left these children alone."

At these words, Turner and I glanced at each other uneasily, but we never confessed to what we had done, feeling that such an admission of guilt would add nothing to the general anxiety over our welfare. As far as I was concerned, Turner's refusal to obey Mr. Hodge, following so close on the revelation of his dislike, was enough, and I would not have minded greatly if the tutor had stayed for the rest of the summer.

But he left the next evening and I never knew the exact nature of the reasons Aunt Edith gave him to explain his dismissal, apart from the annoyance she shared with my father over his leaving us alone beside the fire. Perhaps that in itself was enough, but I am inclined to think that the moment on the porch was when she first made up her mind that Mr. Hodge must go.

For a time we were left tutorless, with a brief interpolation in the form of Mr. Hightower, a three-quarter Cherokee Indian,

whose sole qualifications were that he could teach boxing.

Finally, however, Mr. Robinson, spectacled, kind and humorously firm, appeared to take us in hand. We all became devoted to him, shortened his name to Misstar, and obeyed him implicitly. Weeks later, Turner and I returned to the scene of the crime, but the secret remained ours alone, being laid bare for the first time as I write. It has never troubled me very much except that sometimes I wonder what would have happened if the tree had fallen the other way.

## X

### RECREATION AND SPORT

MY FATHER used to say that he would have liked to have had enough children to make up a baseball team. Since the circumstances of his life defeated this wish by seven, he contented himself with teaching all of us, including my cousins, the finer points of the game. He was an enthusiast and sometimes when he had a spare afternoon in Colorado Springs would take the younger members of his family, and as many other children who might like to come along, to watch a local game. We would sit in a long row, guzzling cream pop and peanuts, and yelling with excitement.

On the ranch we laid out a baseball diamond on a piece of bare ground between Aunt Edith's house and garage where we would play tirelessly with our visiting friends all afternoon, continuing after supper until it grew too dark to see the ball. I could never master the art of "pitching a curve" and preferred the big soft ball we used for one-o'-cat (which the English call "rounders") to the orthodox hard ball that stung my fingers.

My father was an eight-goal polo player, having captained the Denver polo team for many years, and it was natural, if over-optimistic, that he should wish his family also to learn the game. Polo scarcely being a woman's sport, my sister, my stepmother and I were clumsy although earnest players, while of the boys, only Grant achieved anything approximating competence.

Our teams consisted of ourselves and Roy Schoonover with Chick or Del Owens taking a reluctant and sheepish part on the occasions when they were needed to make up the required numbers. The tutors, with the exception of Mr. Manning who did not ride and whose sojourn on Trinchera had been too brief

for him to learn, also played, Mr. Hodge being an exceptionally ardent member of his team, rallying them with loud cries, his blond locks tossing in the wind of his own enthusiasm. "We were an extraordinary and motley collection," mounted on horses of all sizes, our saddles an assortment of the flat English variety and the cantled Western type, our ages ranging from ten to over fifty. It is astonishing that we did not inflict more serious damage upon one another, but apart from a few tumbles we managed to evade dangerous accidents. The immediate members of the family understood the rules of the game, having been thoroughly schooled by my father. Indeed, we took ourselves very seriously, but we could not always count on the behaviour of our guests, most of whom we looked upon as amateurs. Nor could the horses, with the exception of two or three cast-off polo ponies, be relied on not to create havoc by either galloping across each other's paths at the risk of collision or stopping short in bewilderment, unseating their riders and producing a general state of confusion. The referee of the moment would shout and wave his arm helplessly while the teams, reduced to a milling huddle, bristling with nallets, would attempt to sort themselves out. In the end it was usually a chance kick from a hoof that sent the ball on its way again.

The cowhands sometimes stopped to watch, grinning sceptically, or shaking their heads in mystification, while Harve Shannon scratched perplexedly before pronouncing judgment.

"Chasing a bitty old ball, like that," he said disgustedly. "You're plumb loco. Why don't you all learn how to rope a calf instead?"

The field was a flat piece of meadow-land usually reserved for the milk-cows. These animals grew accustomed to our invasions and would gather in the shade of a group of cottonwood trees at the far end of the field, watching our antics with soft, astonished eyes.

When we first went to live on the ranch we swam in a deep pool where Trinchera Creek doubled back on its course before flowing through the woods. Those of us who could swim well used a tree trunk for a diving-board, plunging into the green-



black depths with a screech of anticipation, for the water was deathly cold, coming as it did from the snow-banks of Tfinchera Peak. During our second summer, Aunt Edith had a swimming-pool dug near her house, lined with concrete and filled by means of a shallow ditch connected with the stream. Here, some of us were taught to swim by the primitive method of being told to hold our noses and jump from the deep end. The first time I did this, shivering with apprehension, I sank like a stone, then rose again with wildly thrashing arms, coughing and weeping, managing somehow to keep afloat from sheer fright. I do not feel this manner of learning to swim is advisable, for although we were later taught the various strokes by Misstar, I was not an apt or eager pupil, and never fully recovered from that first terrifying plunge when I believed, with justification, that I was drowning. Nevertheless, I used the pool as much as anyone, concealing my shameful timidity and staying as close as possible to the shallow end. We built a slide from which we entered the pool on our stomachs, occasionally collecting splinters on our way down. On hot afternoons the surface of the pool held the sun's warmth, but underneath, some of the snow's chill temperature always remained, and it was a delicious sensation to tread water in the cold depths, our heads in the sun, water-spiders skating past our noses in startled flight.

We shared the pool with all manner of companions from the animal world, only the water-dogs, or mud-puppies, a kind of salamander, being indigenous to this watery environment. The rest of the animals arrived by accident and it was a common occurrence for us to help to dry land the squirrels, rabbits and mice which, venturing too far, had overbalanced and fallen into the pool. Several times we would arrive in the morning to find a horse standing in pained dignity at the shallow end of the pool, for there was no fence separating it from the surrounding pasture, and the ensuing struggle to force the annoyed animal by means of ropes and shouted encouragement up the steps added greatly to the day's pleasure.

I cannot remember whose idea it was that we should make a tennis court, perhaps my stepmother's or Evelyn's, both of whom

played well, my sister having learned when she went away to school.' The rest of us scarcely needed this form of recreation, since our days were already overcharged with activities which occupied us from early morning until we were forced into bed. Nevertheless the plan was welcomed with a collective excitement and we all set to work clearing away the sagebrush from a chosen spot, dragged the ground smooth, rolled it and finally, with John Roybal's help, built a high fence made of chicken wire. We were immensely proud of the result and for a time played fervently, usually attired in our bathing-suits since the pool was only a short distance away and we could end our games by cooling off in the water.

Gradually, however, a blight began to steal over our pleasure. We discovered that the upkeep of a tennis court in such surroundings far exceeded any subsequent enjoyment, for the heavy rains washed away the surface gravel, leaving pits and runnels; weeds sprouted overnight, and finally, like an inevitable figure of doom, Kate the mule discovered it on one of her foraging excursions. Night after night she would force entry to roll happily on the flat earth, until she had rounded out a small crater, leaving beside it on her departure the infallible mark of her contempt, a pile of dung.

In the end, we recognised defeat, rolled up the net, put away our racquets and used the tennis court for an accumulating brush pile which we burned each year to celebrate the Fourth of July.

This holiday was marked by a sequence of events which seldom varied from year to year and provided us with a certain novelty, for it was the day when we all attended the rodeo forty miles away in Monte Vista. At that time, rodeos had not yet become the highly commercialised affairs they are today but were far more a competitive arrangement between ranches, still personal enough for us to recognise the different entries in the bronc-busting, calf-roping or bull-dogging contests as people or animals whom we knew. Indeed, Del Owens and Cheese always competed in the Monte Vista rodeo, Del becoming such a consistent winner that later, on leaving my father's employment, he joined a large inter-State rodeo as a professional rider. As well as having

our own men entered in the Monte Vista rodeo, we were able to watch our own horses in the cow-pony races or bronco contests, laying heated bets among ourselves which we paid, not in currency, but in chocolate bars or bottles of pop.

The road to Monte Vista followed the D. & R.G.W. nearly all the way, "the longest stretch of straight track in the country," my father said. The air shimmered with mirage and jack-rabbits bounced away across the sandy flats. Sometimes we would see a road-runner, its long tail jerking rhythmically as it stepped across our path, or a coyote which paused a moment to stare at us over its shoulder before loping off casually into the sagebrush. Just before reaching the outskirts of Monte Vista the road crossed the Rio Grande and I never quite recovered from my disappointment over its sluggish yellow stream, so different from the rolling torrent which I had always imagined.

The rodeo ground with its tumult of sound, the gay frenzy of bright flags, and the presence of so many people, silenced us temporarily and we followed my father a little shyly to our places in the grandstand, feeling strange in our unaccustomed best clothes, I in particular, since I always wore a dress on these occasions. In those days there were none of the innovations of Brahma bulls, high-stepping majorettes twirling batons above brief-skirts, or even loud-speakers. But the grand parade at the start thrilled us as the horses swept four abreast around the arena, their riders magnificently attired in white sheepskin or soft leather chaps, the silver trimmings of their saddles glinting in the sun, while the horses curved their necks self-consciously, shying and side-stepping with excitement. There were cowgirls too, dressed in fringed buckskin skirts, but we viewed these ladies with a certain disdain, recognising most of them for what they were—a purely decorative appendage. Some of the more extravagantly dressed male riders did not meet with our approval either, for we placed them in the category of what Harve Shannon called "drug-store cowboys," meaning that they were less functional than imitative. Nevertheless, we enjoyed nearly everything, with the exception of bull-dogging. I could never watch the tortured expression of the steer, as his head was twisted more and more

## DAYS OF ELK AND BUFFALO

grotesquely to one side in the effort to bring him to his knees, without a sick feeling. Neither did the sight of the cow-puncher being dragged along in the dirt as he fought to subdue his victim make me feel anything but uncomfortable, and after one of these men was killed in front of us, crushed by the steer's great weight as it fell, I could not bear to look and would close my eyes.

In the intervals we sometimes went to the bucking-chutes to speak to Del or Cheese, feeling superior as we stood talking to them, watched by the interested eyes of the waiting competitors who perched on the fence with their high heels hooked over the poles.

When the last sun-fishing, kicking bronco had been ridden, the last race run, the last prize presented, we would sigh with satisfaction and start out for the car.

"But ain't you going to stay for the dance?"

It would be Blondić, tightly curled and bedecked with ruffles, her big blue eyes gleaming with excitement.

Although I sometimes thought about it as we drove back to Trinchera, we never did stay for the dance, for our own evening had already been planned, and it was not until I reached my teens that the idea of the Monte Vista dance presented itself to me in the light of envy. After all there waited for us at home a special meal of fried chicken, corn-on-the-cob, and chocolate ice-cream, to say nothing of the bonfire, the rockets and catherine wheels. The soft, black night would flower into sudden colour and we watched entranced as the rockets hissed their way sky-wards, exploding far above our heads, while the horses in a nearby field snorted fearfully as the shower of sparks rained down from the stars. We gave up the rockets after a time, my father deciding they were dangerous since they frightened the livestock and were a possible cause of forest fires. We heard his decision, disappointed but philosophical, recognising that the practical side of ranch life must always take precedence.

Paradoxically, it was this sane practical side which furnished us with our chief pleasures, one of the main ones being the haying season, and on a day late in June the three Schley boys, Maurice Hager and I saddled our horses and rode down to the lower

meadows, where we knew the mowing and stacking were in progress. As we passed the house, I noticed that Evelyn and Caroline Swift were playing tennis and I wished for a moment that I too was eligible for that nebulous, exclusive circle to which they belonged at fourteen, where the accepted conversations seemed to be in the form of whispers, accompanied by secret smiles and a quick interchange of glance which betrayed nothing to the outsider. To me they were mysterious and enviable, and the fact that part of their adolescent mystery had recently been explained to me by no means reduced my wistful desire to be one of them. Only the week before, I begged Caroline to play tennis with me, expecting her to agree, for she was a good-natured girl, and usually paid attention to my persistent demands. But this time she shook her head.

No, I can't."

"But why? You said you would yesterday. We still have a set to finish."

"I know, but I can't play."

I felt betrayed. Perhaps she considered me too unworthy an opponent. Humiliation drove me on.

"Please, Caroline, you promised. I don't see why you can't. Why can't you? Why?"

I buzzed around her like an angry mosquito.

She gave me a weary half-smile, not even large enough to show the dimples which we all admired, including Caroline, and walked away, leaving me with a sensation of snubbed bewilderment. After a time, I took myself and my injured feelings off into the hills where I spent the rest of the day charging madly up and down the ravines until my face ran with sweat and my chest ached. Digging up a large ant-hill occupied me for an hour and it was sunset when I emerged from my self-imposed solitude. I took a short cut across the fields to the Schley house, wishing to avoid meeting Caroline and my sister. It had also occurred to me that Aunt Edith would perhaps explain to me the reasons for Caroline's behaviour. My aunt was almost always to be relied on in matters of this kind, despite her inexplicable burst of Puritanism, like the book-burning, or the habit she had of deliver-

ing small homilies like "never kick against the pricks" or telling me that the way to "master oneself is a dogged kind of quality in one which keeps saying 'I will' after every defeat." Her manner when offering me these truisms was neither smugly moral nor patronising. Furthermore, I loved her too much ever to doubt her wisdom, even while the words in themselves made me query my own fluctuating strength of character.

I found Aunt Edith lying on the black leather couch in her living-room, listening to the victrola, her eyes closed, and I waited quietly until the record had finished. We all reacted to music in a similar fashion in our family, that is, with indiscriminating emotion. I once heard my father announce extravagantly that he would "crawl on my hands and knees if I could make music like that!" He was referring to a record of "Humoresque" played by Kreisler, and so greatly was I impressed by his words that no subsequent growth in critical faculty or sneers from those more knowledgeable than I have been able to undermine the tenderness I feel towards this rather spastic composition.

With the exception of Aunt Edith, we were all completely uneducated musically, but we listened for hours on end to whatever records were available, the majority of them being selections from Italian opera sung by Caruso, Melba, Alina Gluck, Schumann-Heinke and others. My first introduction to Tennyson was through the musical version of "The Brook," rendered in this case by Melba, and I found it fascinating, partly because I could not fully understand what it meant to "come from haunts of coot and hern," associating a coot vaguely with the slang interpretation for life, which was "cootie." The word "hern" also baffled me, although it suggested somehow a glade dappled with shadows. The refrain of this song delighted both Evelyn and me and we would prance about howling in unison, "I go on forevah, evah, I go on forevah!" until told to desist.

John McCormack was a great favourite with us and I played his record of "Mother Machree" over and over, the sentimental tears rolling down my face, as I swallowed pleasantly in my obscure grief. Gilbert and Sullivan were less popular, although we got to know many of their songs by heart. I felt about these

scores rather as I did about *Stalky and Co.*, which I read with a certain amount of confusion. It was as though Kipling had forgotten to translate part of the text, the English idiom being as foreign to me as a book written in Russian. Not that this ignorance bothered me greatly. I read everything I could find from Ethel M. Dell to Dickens, and it would be difficult to decide whether *Greatheart* gave me more pleasure than the *Tale of Two Cities* since I found both absorbing. In like fashion, I experienced a sorrow on reading Oscar Wilde's more pathetic fairy stories which was fully equal to my sensations after finishing *The Wide, Wide World*, that Victorian classic of patient suffering and noble selflessness, where the heroine always seemed to be wearing white cotton stockings. Zane Grey remained a staunch favourite with all of us and we read each new novel as it came out, peopling our own grand wilderness with his characters and substituting ourselves for his heroes and heroines. The animal stories of Charles G. D. Roberts delighted me, as did *White Fang*, by Jack London, but strangely, it was this author's socialist novels which I liked best and I read *Martin Eden* and *Valley of the Moon* eagerly, the latter several times, even though the more complicated aspects of American labour problems escaped me, and I was forced to ask my father the meaning of words like "scab" and "blackleg," confusing the latter with a malignant form of disease which attacked our cows from time to time.

I was the only one who played a musical instrument in our family, apart from Aunt Edith, who had early on decided that I must become a student of the piano. At the time I considered this to be a form of torture in the same class with learning to sew, but as my lessons progressed and I was able to play with a certain aptitude, the idea of becoming a pianist took form in my mind, an idea which I later attempted to develop but without success. Practising, of course, was the evil variant of my piano-playing, and now, as I sat with Aunt Edith in her living-room, I was hoping that she would not ask me if I had been working on my scales. In my guilt, I remembered her words about mastering oneself, and squirmed slightly on my chair.

When the record had finished I laid my problem concerning

## DAYS OF ELK AND BUFFALO

Caroline before Aunt Edith, awaiting eagerly for her explanation, and when she said, "Goodness me, has no one ever told you?" I knew with relief that some other reason besides my own incompetence, as a tennis player lay behind Caroline's refusal to join me in a game.

An hour later I returned to my own house bearing a fresh burden of knowledge in which there was a certain amount of puzzlement. Nevertheless, I was satisfied to learn that I was an equal with both Caroline and Evelyn in my potential ability to bear children. The intricacies of menstruation, which Aunt Edith had explained by offering me a simile in which she described the womb as being prepared "like a house-cleaning" for a possible tenant, were not wholly clear to me, but this lack of understanding was balanced by the awe I felt on thinking of myself as a mother. To be sure I was still well behind the others—there was no evidence to prove that I was even capable of belonging to their charmed circle—but as I passed the window of my sister's room and glanced in to see the two girls giggling over some secret acknowledgment of their superiority, I did not feel as usual the old wounding sense of being left out.

Nevertheless, riding by the tennis court a week later on my way to the hay-fields, I had a slight recurrence of envy and to cover it I bent forward to swat a 'non-existent fly,' as though my attention had been diverted from the court because of this.

"Are you coming to watch the haying?" It was Grant.

My sister waved her racquet. "We might, later on."

The hay-meadows lay a mile beyond Harve Shannon's house, stretching on either side of Trinchera Creek the width of the valley. The ripe yellow-green wild hay was filmed over here and there by a russet mist where timothy grew the thickest and the air was scented with the sweet fragrance of clover blossoms. For a time we followed behind John Roybal who was mowing a rich, green growth of alfalfa down by the stream, then leaving our horses to feast, reins down, we hurried across to where the stacker was raising its steel-tipped fingers into the air. We raced one another through the uncut hay, tripping often in the thick tangle



of clover to fall breathless and laughing, nearly hidden in the fragrant, luxurious growth.

Harve Shannon stood near the stacker, directing operations, his sombrero on the back of his head. He greeted us cheerfully, but warned us away from the path of the rakes that fed their burdens of hay to the stacker one by one until, fully loaded, it soared upwards, to deposit the hay on a fast growing pile. There were no machines in those days; all the work was done by big Percheron teams, their thick necks curved like horses on a Roman coin, their rumps polished and heavy with muscle. I admired these animals and was always delighted when allowed to ride them back from the hay-fields or new-ploughed land, my legs sticking out from their tub-like flanks, my body swaying with their slow, powerful movements.

"You kids be good now, an' I'll leave you have a ride on the stacker."

Harve kept his word, and as the afternoon went by, each of the boys was borne aloft with the stacker's sweep, falling with shrieks of joy in a shower of hay on top of the stack where the men who were working there caught them before they were buried too deeply. I was a little fearful of these journeys into the air, preferring to endure a certain amount of teasing rather than undergo the frightening plunge into the hay. There were other pleasures, however, equally engrossing, in which I took part, one of them being a prolonged exploration of the tunnels made by pigs in the stacks still standing from last year's season. We crawled in on hands and knees, risking suffocation or a sudden encounter with a snuffling, startled pig, emerging ten minutes later scratched and choking, our hair covered with dust and the short ends of dried hay. We would then rush down to the stream, where we lay flat on our stomachs drinking deeply and dipping our heads into the water, gasping a little from the icy shock. Sometimes we would lie idly on the stream bank, hearing the bees loud in the clover, the voices of the men and the jingle of harness, our eyes following the lazy progress of summer clouds that sailed up over the top of Mount Blanca, their shadows moving from one quiet meadow to the next.

Half-way through the bright afternoon, Evelyn and Caroline appeared, riding slowly across the fields. They looked cool and pretty and very clean in their white blouses and tan drill breeches, and I was suddenly conscious of my own disreputable state, my half-dried, matted hair, my bare, lacerated knees.

Harve waved a greeting, but the girls slid from their horses some distance away from the stack, standing side by side, pretending not to notice the stares directed at them from different members of the haying crew.

"Come on, girls, grab a-holt. You can have a ride on the stacker."

But they shook their heads, looking demure. Nor would they agree to come with us into a new pig-tunnel we had just charted, and I looked a little resentfully at my sister. Last year, I thought, she would have come, even though it would probably have resulted in a bout of hay fever to which she was subject. But my resentment was short-lived, for I decided that this aloofness was all part of the peculiar process of growing-up in accordance with Aunt Edith's explanation. Besides, Turner had just shouted to me that he had found a nest of field mice and I hurried away to join him.

The sun was dropping down over Mount Blanca when we started home, and the shadows of our horses' hooves looked like elongated, upside-down bottles on the white dust of the road. We stopped at The Farm for a drink of buttermilk and a brief but intensely exciting game of "Kick-the-Can" with the Shannon girls in which Evelyn and Caroline condescended to join us, since, with the absence of all the men in the hay-fields, there were no speculative eyes to watch them.

When we set off once more on the homeward journey we were tired and sweaty, but full of contentment, arguing cheerfully among ourselves as to the relative merits of our different horses. We had decided to take a short cut through the fields instead of following the road along the foothills, a decision which we soon regretted since it brought us very close to disaster.

We were more than half-way across the field when Grant

stopped his horse suddenly, looking at the rest of us with an expression of mounting fear.

"Isn't this the field where—where Silver's pastured?"

Silver was the huge, grey Percheron stallion, arrogant and fierce, whom we often watched through the bars of his corral at The Farm, admiring the sculptured lines of his great neck and quarters and the cascading, white sweep of tail and mane. During certain weeks in the summer he was given the freedom of an entire meadow to himself and we were all informed of the change so that we would not run the risk of meeting him without the protection of a fence between us.

Now the others were looking at me as the authority on these matters and I replied quickly, "No, they haven't moved him yet. He's still in the other field."

But I was not at all sure of the truth of my words. Was Silver really in the other field? I dithered in my mind, unable to remember which week it was, terrified that I might be mistaken.

"Well, I don't see him anyway. Let's go on. We're nearly at the gate anyway."

Grant's voice sounded confident but I saw him watching the clumps of willows that lined the field with a careful eye.

"What's that?"

Caroline pointed suddenly at a flash of white that showed through the bushes jutting out on our right, where the meadow widened in the shape of a T. We stared, recognising the white movement for what it was—the sun's rays catching Silver's tail as he swung it against his sides in defence against the hungry assault of flies. There was no doubt about it, we were imprisoned in the same field as the stallion!

"What'll we do?"

Chal's eyes were wide with fear.

"Shut up!"

Grant spoke in a fierce whisper and we were all seized by a collective terror that drove the blood from our faces and made our hearts pound in our chests. It was both remarkable and fortunate for us that the stallion had neither scented nor heard our approach, but as we whispered our plans for escape we were

fully aware that he might do so at any moment, or again, might simply change his position under the trees, thereby catching sight of us.

Since we were already so near to the gate on the home side of the meadow, we decided to work our way gradually closer along the trees by the left-hand edge where the fence ran along the stream, making a mad break for the gate if the stallion charged us, or, if necessary, rolling off our horses to escape under the barbed-wire fence, a contingency we prayed would not arise. As the only one riding a mare, a seal-brown little creature named Pocohantas, better known as Pokey, who had superseded Queenie, I was told to lead the procession since, as Grant said, "He's sure to go after her first so the closer you are to the gate, the better."

We began to move again, following the line of trees in single file, rigid with fear, our hearts leaping each time a horse stumbled or blew out its breath. The ground here was marshy and the horses laboured along slowly, drawing their feet out with loud, squelching noises that seemed to us to echo across the field.

I began to mutter the alphabet, a habit of mine when disturbed or fearful. "A-b-c-d-e-f-g," I babbled, over and over, gabbling the letters so fast that they slurred one into the other. "A-b-c-d-e-f-g!"

"Hurry up, oh, hurry up!"

It was Evelyn's beseeching whisper behind me. I glanced around to see her face, white with anxiety.

"I can't, it's this mud!"

Besides, we dared not gallop. The sound of our horses' hooves would be sure to arouse Silver. The gate still seemed miles away.

Squelch! Squelch! the slow hooves worked in and out of the resistant mud and I beat a desperate tattoo with my heels against Pokey's fat sides. We had reached the corner where the fence turned towards the gate and Grant whispered loudly "Now!" bringing the ends of his reins down hard on his pony's flanks. As we broke into a canter, Pokey uttered a whinny, whether for reasons of frustrated desire or irritation at being made to move too quickly I was never to know. But the noise she made seemed to our ears like the voice of doom and we saw at the same

moment that Silver had heard and was looking at us, his head raised, more monument than horse. Just as we reached the gate he began moving towards us, his big hooves rising and falling like the pistons of some powerful engine as it warms into action. We reached the gate, and as Grant held it open, crowded through in a disorganised mass, expecting the thundering sound of Silver's approach at any second. But the gate was already slammed when he began to trot towards us, then to gallop, and as we raced away down the road, not waiting to look at him, we heard the great trumpeting neigh, time after time, following us in our flight.

At the next gate we stopped to rest, falling from our horses into the grass, abandoning ourselves to the aftermath of fear, our slightly hysterical laughter falling away into short silences as we remembered the narrowness of our escape.

We agreed among ourselves not to speak of the affair, unless asked. I cannot remember that anyone ever did question us, but two years later I came across a story in Balzac in which a stallion mounts a fleeing mare, crushing the rider to death, and I suddenly remembered our terror as we rode through the swampy grass, knowing we must move faster, but neither daring to, nor able, like a nightmare when one is pursued but powerless to escape.

## XI

### THE FEDERAL AGENTS ARE COMING!

EVEN AS children, we were all familiar with Prohibition, our acquaintance with this negative social experiment beginning and ending on the wrong side of the law. Growing up in the era of the furtive knock, the eye at the speak-easy grill, or the wine-filled teacup, hastily hidden, might in itself have served as introduction; but in addition, our awareness was strongly fortified by the frequent smell of juniper berries and gin in our own bathroom, while in Colorado Springs we had become accustomed to the regular visits at our Broadmoor house of a small man with a large suitcase. By his own statement, he was a salesman for various brands of cereal, but we heard denial in the faint clinking sounds issuing from his heavy case and grinned at one another as the study door closed behind the visitor and my father.

The ring at the door-bell always came around supper-time, but if any of us happened to be looking out of the window at the time we would know in advance of the man's arrival, since he always parked his car a block away on the opposite side of the street. After fifteen minutes or so, we would hear my father's cheerful voice as he sent the visitor on his way, and waited expectantly for him to join us at the table, knowing that the atmosphere would be enlivened as a result of his brief sojourn in the study, and that his blue eyes would show an extra sparkle.

"Straight off the boat!" he would say jovially, and the phrase became synonymous in my mind with a feeling of general good humour. Although it was not for a long time that I understood its real meaning, I feel now that my own interpretation is still the more accurate one, since it is highly unlikely that our "cereal salesman" procured his stock at any time straight off a boat from

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Scotland, or that my father by his words was disclosing anything more than wishful thinking. It was enough, no doubt, for him to realise that his cupboard was no longer bare of whisky, either genuine Scotch or some more dubious domestic brand.

There actually was a large cupboard at the head of our front stairs, supposedly a linen closet, but the presence of a Yale lock and the fact that no one but my father or my stepmother was allowed to enter revealed the main purpose it served. Despite the lock, burglary was committed by an ex-groom of my father's, Jack Malloy, a loose-jointed Irishman, whose craving for hard liquor and the exaggerated manner in which he periodically satisfied this craving eventually drove my father to end their association.

On this occasion, Jack's thirst overcame him about three o'clock in the morning, and with a cunning born of fierce desire he entered the house through a window, forced the lock, engaged himself with the contents of the closet, then spoiled everything by falling down the stairs with a clatter and crash that brought us all running from our rooms. My father stood at the head of the stairs in his dressing-gown, gazing down sternly on the thief, who was so far gone in his wits and so lacking in criminal *savoir faire* that he could only sit mournfully on the bottom step, wagging his head in repentance and murmuring that he was sorry.

The man with the suitcase never failed to come in January, for my father held open house on Christmas and New Year's Day, serving egg-nog from a huge silver bowl which had to be replenished often, thereby greatly depleting the contents of the wine-cupboard. I would take a stand behind the banisters on the upstairs landing, listening to the voices of the guests, as they rose gradually from a subdued hum to a frantic gabble while the level of the punch-bowl sank and rose and sank again. These convivial gatherings did not always end happily and there were occasions when it would have been difficult to distinguish between Jack Malloy's behaviour and the guests', save that the latter had not resorted to burglary as a means of quenching their thirst.

Alcoholic beverages, as they were called by the prohibitionists, were certainly not unknown on the ranch either. There were loud reports in the night when the stoppers blew out of my father's bottles of home-made beer; the air in the tractor shed down at The Farm was charged by fumes emanating from Harve Shannon's own brew of locally grown hops and yeast cake; and in the sheep pasture stood a small earth cellar, sprouting weeds and heavily insulated against intrusion by thick bushes and a padlocked door. The contents of this cellar were simply called "pre-war" and were used only for special occasions.

Aunt Edith also possessed a precious store of alcoholic beverage—her preference being hock (as I later learned)—and would often sit with my father on her porch, both of them sipping a glass of the cool, gold liquid as a suitable accompaniment to the sunset pageant over Mount Blanca. But if we asked them what they were drinking they merely smiled and said it was white grape-juice. We vaguely recognised this hypocrisy as a concomitant of the current mass deception practised by our elders in matters of drink, but we were not really fooled for long. It made little difference to me anyway, since after a taste of my father's glass I decided that whether white grape-juice or wine, it was highly unpalatable. Fortunately, my views have since changed.

Our own youthful drinking habits were mainly confined to root-beer and lemonade, which we liked better than synthetic beverages. The root-beer was distilled by Mrs. Glyn, who insisted that it was excellent for whatever ailed us, part of her enthusiasm being attributable to her disapproval of any food or drink which was not made in her own kitchen. On hot days we drank as many as three bottles of the stuff at a time, and I am certain now, remembering how we would be laid out in giggling rows under the cottonwood trees, the leaves a flickering pattern above us, that the root-beer contained not a little alcohol.

It seemed inevitable that something must occur to interrupt this law-breaker's paradise, and one warm August day the first whispers of disaster were heard. We children were gathered near our garage, waiting for Harve Shannon to return from Fort



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Garland where he had gone for supplies and the mail, promising at the same time that he would bring back a box of chocolate-covered cherries, the expense of which we had covered by sharing out our meagre pocket-money. We lolled on the grass, bickering lazily and watching the gossamer drift of cotton from the cotton-wood trees. We speculated as to whether it could be put to some use, then turned our attention to a game of mumbledy-peg, which we played with jack-knives. The air was scented with wild sweet-pea blossoms and from time to time a cloud of tiny butterflies, blue as cornflowers, sailed over our heads. In a nearby field a group of horses exploded into sudden galloping movement as they desperately tried to escape the flies, and a shimmering heat-haze filmed the mountain ranges.

"There he is !"

Turner had jumped to his feet, pointing to where the cloud of dust moving up the valley proclaimed Harve's arrival. We watched eagerly, following his progress with a running commentary, for we knew each dip and hill in the road by heart.

"He's passed The Farm !"

"He's near the red gate !"

"Now he's reached the thank-you-ma'ams. Gosh, he's driving awfully fast !"

"Yes, he certainly is making the old flivver move !"

Of late, Harve had been using the Model T station-wagon more and more as his increasing weight made it difficult for him to fit comfortably into a saddle. Gradually, under his tonnage, the Ford had fractured its springs on the right side one by one until it sagged like a bird with a broken wing, and the mudguards clattered like castanets. Harve's humiliation soon gave way to humour, and while at first he would say, "Hell ! Ain't it a thing—Harve Shannon ridin' this bitty old Tin Lizzie," he now drove with abandon, shouting "Ride 'em, cowboy !" as he rammed his foot on the starting pedal.

There he was ! We waited expectantly, hearing the Ford rumble over the pipe-laid cattle-stile, then the last hollow bump across a wooden bridge, and he pulled up with a squawk of brakes beside us. The Ford's water was boiling and we knew with

pleasure that the potato Harve used as a radiator cap would be cooked to a turn.

"Where's the boss?"

Harve's voice was fierce enough to silence our clamour. His big sombrero was pushed to the back of his bald head and the sweat ran freely down his temples.

"Where's your father?"

"He's down by the stable."

We watched him stomp off, his high-heeled boots kicking up puffs of dust with each step. What was the matter with him? We examined the back of the Ford eagerly. There was only the mail-sack—no supplies, no chocolates! What could have happened to make him forget? We raced down the hill to the stable where Harve and my father were deep in conversation. Greatly to our indignation, we were told to go away without explanation, although my father called after us, "Why don't you ride into the hills for some flowers? The wild asters will be in bloom on the south side."

We saddled our horses grumpily and rode away up the lane behind the stable in mutinous silence. But gradually the beauty of the day soothed us and we began to discuss Harve's peculiar behaviour, deciding something of importance must have occurred if my father was so ready to endorse it.

"Maybe it's another outbreak of rabies," said Grant. "Gee, I hope not. Remember the last one?"

We all remembered the unpleasant time when a coyote stricken with rabies had spread the epidemic through San Luis Valley by biting a sheep. For a week we had lived in fear of the scourge attacking our own animals, but with the exception of a few sheep pastured in the lower meadows they escaped. The incident was accented dramatically when another coyote, in the last stages of the disease, appeared suddenly in front of the Hoagland Brothers' General Store, walking jerkily down the road while the inhabitants ran for shelter. Shorty Hoagland shot the poor mad creature from the steps of the store and was proclaimed a hero. He accepted the general praise modestly enough, but with his usual ability for distorting the truth, retold the story later in a

version so embellished that his listeners imagined an entire pack of coyotes instead of a single one.

We decided against the possibility of rabies, feeling that we would not have been allowed to ride into the hills in such a case. Well then, was it drought? Had the reservoir dried up again, leaving stinking piles of dead fish on the queer, spongy lake bottom? This, too, seemed unlikely, since there had been plenty of rain recently. What about a fight between some of the men? A possibility certainly, but why should we not be told?

"Maybe it's rustlers," said Turner hopefully.

"Don't be such a sap." Grant looked at his younger brother severely. "Uncle Bryant says there aren't any more rustlers."

It was a fact that there had been no cattle rustlers on Trinchera since Mrs. Hungerford Smith's last visit several years before. My father, greatly to that lady's interest as well as our own excitement, had buckled on his revolver belt with a determined air, and with a posse of men had set off after the thieves. I cannot now remember the outcome of this chase, but I have not forgotten Mrs. Hungerford Smith's pleasure as she said, "Why, it's just like something out of a book." The incident must have compensated her greatly for the dullness of ranch life and the huge landscape which she found so frighteningly empty.

"Pec-yough!"

Chal held his nose suddenly and at the same moment the rest of us became aware of the smell of death rising up from the sagebrush.

"It's only the Bone Yard."

The Bone Yard was the place where all hopelessly diseased or very old animals were brought to be shot, their carcasses subsequently used as coyote bait or simply left to rot until their bones lay bare and white.

"The Bone Yard's way in back of us. It can't be that."

We investigated on foot, following the stench to its source, which we discovered to be a dead calf, far gone in decomposition, and we examined it carefully, pinching our nostrils together, fascinated but a little sick at the sight of the surging, palpitating mass of creamy grubs that nearly hid the calf's body. But it was

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not an unusual experience for any of us and we had strong stomachs. Indeed, we paid regular, macabre visits to the Bone Yard to watch the process of decay, which was aided by the hungry presence of buzzards, coyotes and magpies until only a few dried shreds of skin remained attached to the bones and, in the case of a horse, the lonely, almost living spread of tail and mane. Our secret trails through woods, sagebrush and foothill were marked for us by the stripped bones of dead animals, and we talked among ourselves about riding "up Squirrel Creek where the black and white colt died," or "down in the hay-meadows where the old cow got stuck." This latter reference concerned a cow who, in a frenzy of floored madness, had wedged herself between two trees, where she eventually died. Although her carcass had now sunk down until it was partially concealed by the long grass, we always remembered to visit her as we rode past, paying a kind of gruesomely affectionate homage to the blanching bones.

Ending our investigation of the dead calf, we decided that it must have died of exposure, left behind by a forgetful mother. Since it was rare to find a calf born this late in the season, we agreed to report the incident to my father, and rode on feeling pleased with ourselves. Ten minutes later we had passed, with a natural logic, from decay to a luxuriant springing life, and were wading knee-deep in a purple bank of wild asters, their rich mass broken here and there by a blazing cluster of scarlet Indian paintbrush, or the dull, antique yellow of goldenrod. We picked and picked, braiding the flowers into our horses' manes, decorating their bridles with Turkish bouquets, and tying large bunches of the mingled blossoms behind our saddles. We were engrossed and happy, a little giddy from the sun and the brilliant wave of colour, and had quite forgotten Harve Shannon and his mystery.

An hour later, walking up from the stable, with our bright burdens, we stopped abruptly, staring at the extraordinary spectacle before us. In the wide lane between the sheep pasture and our house, John Roybal was driving a strangely assorted herd of milk-cows, saddle-horses and sheep in an aimless circle, a herd that to our practised gaze belonged to no accepted category

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of the ranch. True, it was close to milking-time, but what were the sheep and horses doing up here instead of being in their respective pastures, and why were they all milling around in that fantastic manner? Nearly dropping the flowers in our excitement we ran to John for an explanation, but he only smiled and refused to reply.

Near the house we encountered Roy Schoonover carrying a large box, and again we begged for information.

"Out of my way, kids," was his answer and we straggled on towards the kitchen to deposit our bouquets, our bewilderment growing each minute. Perhaps Selma would tell us——

"No, I ain't seen nothing and I don't know nothing. Now you go on out of my kitchen."

We gathered in a frustrated group in the patio, until summoned by a startled cry from Evelyn, who had gone to her room. Here again were evidences that the entire ranch had been afflicted by some form of insanity, for the furniture had been moved about into unaccustomed places and an overwhelming odour of disinfectant pervaded every corner. We hurried out again in time to see my father backing the car from the garage and swarmed on to the running-boards, beseeching him to tell us what was happening, asking where he was going at that moment and could we come too?

He smiled, shook his head and told us we must be patient, but allowed us to accompany him to The Farm where he was going to see Harve, and we piled into the car feeling that revelation could not now be far off.

The scene at The Farm appeared on first glance to be quite ordinary. A rich scent of frying meat drifted from the open door of the house; and Harve's Model T was parked in its usual place under a big tree. There was no one about but we heard a sudden bellow from behind the machine shed and hurried over to find Harve and two men engaged in such peculiar activity that it seemed for a minute they had become quite mad. Harve was standing on the bank of the stream hurling bottles one after another into the water, his face streaming with sweat, his hat hanging by nothing to the back of his skull, while beside him the

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two men were tipping a barrel over the edge of the bank, watching in dismayed horror as the contents poured forth into the stream. The air around was permeated by a strong odour of beer.

"Ain't no fartin' shorthorn agent gonna get my likker!" Harve murmured in a kind of frenzied descant. Splash! went another bottle. "What for good are thim agents anyhow!" Splash! and this time a tinkle as bottle met rock. He turned to see us gaping at him and he held his fire momentarily.

"Hell! I didn't see you, Mr. Turner."

He came closer and for an instant his small white teeth showed in a grin of apology, then he rounded on his two helpers who had by now emptied the barrel.

"All right, you two hambres. Hightail it outta here and git us another."

He looked at my father again. "Sure hurts me where I feel it most, but I figured it were the best way. Maybe tomorrow I kin git some of thim bottles back. Say, boss, you heard anything?"

My father shook his head, his expression one of mingled concern and amusement.

"No, but I expect Shorty will be up to tell us if anything breaks."

"Yeh, I guess so."

He went back to his bottle-throwing, and the men returned with another barrel, then another and another, their faces growing longer with each trip. As the last bottle was pitched into the water and the fourth and final barrel emptied, my father said with a little smile, "Hope it won't kill all the trout, Harve. That's powerful stuff you brew."

Harve grinned. "Yeh, I guess thim fish'll git a bellyful. Say, what is it, kiddo? You seeh somethin'?"

For Nanalee had come running round the corner of the machine shed, panting and self-important. I stared at her enviously. Had she been let into the secret?

"There's a big cloud of dust comin' up the valley. I reckon it's a car. Mama says you better come."

Harve looked grim and my father's face glanced round at us

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soberly. "I'll explain later," he said. "But meanwhile, forget what you've just seen and don't say a word. All right, Harve, we'd better get back to the house."

We followed in awed silence, clustering around my father and Harve as they waited beside the car. Mrs. Shannon emerged, looking anxious, and came over to join us.

"You reckon it's them?"

Her voice was loaded with apprehension and I stared at her wonderingly. What was coming? Who were "them"? What were agents?

"Who are——?" I began, but Evelyn said "hush" in a warning voice and I subsided.

The cloud of dust came nearer and in his agitation Harve began walking down towards the bridge. He stopped abruptly, calling back, "That there's Shorty's jitney."

We watched as the dust cloud turned down The Farm lane revealing itself by its noise and lurching movement to be Shorty Hoagland's ancient Ford. It bumped across the bridge and up the rise to the house, and before its engine died on a final asthmatic cough, Harve was leaning over the side, his broad posterior blocking the driver's seat from our view.

"What's the news, Shorty? You heard when they'll be here? We're all fixed now. 'Ain't no agents gonna jump this here claim."

Shorty climbed out of the car slowly.

"Howdy, Mister Turner. Howdy, Ma'm."

He settled himself with maddening deliberation on the Ford's running-board, fished in his shirt pocket, brought out a plug of chewing-tobacco and bit off a large piece. He was wearing his deputy sheriff badge pinned to a dirty wool waistcoat.

"Give it to us, Shorty. Pronto! They comin' soon?"

Shorty chewed for a minute, then spat a brown stream of tobacco juice to one side. He rubbed his stained, grey moustache.

"Ain't a comin'," he said laconically.

"What!"

Harve's voice was so laden with anguish that his wife stepped forward to lay her hand on his arm.

"What happened, Shorty? How far did they get?"

My father sounded eager.

"Well, I done heard they got clear up to Alamosa afore they turned back. Come in over Mosca Pass. Reckon they figgered they wasn't any pickin's up this way."

He grinned up at my father. "You think they figgered right, Mister Turner?"

My father was smiling. "Well now, Shorty, you're the law around here. You ought to know."

Shorty nodded sagely. "I reckon so."

Harve was staring at him, face scarlet, his blue eyes wild. He seemed on the point of explosion.

"You mean to tell me thim goddamned sons o' bitches——!"

"Now Harve, now Harve!"

Mrs. Shannon glanced at my father apologetically.

"Why the ornery, 'mean——!"

"You'd better go back to the machine shed, Harve," said my father quickly. "You've got some work to do there."

Harve looked startled, then his face puckered uncertainly, giving him the look of an enormous baby.

"Oh, sure, sure. Reckon that's right."

He stumped away, his low-slung jeans sagging even lower over his big buttocks. Nanalee moved to follow him, but her mother said sharply, "You leave your dad alone. He's busy."

Shorty wore a quizzical expression. "Harve acts like he's poco loco. You figger it'd be a good idee if I was to help him, Mister Turner?"

He was grinning to himself, his sharp little eyes speculative.

"Now, Shorty, you know there isn't any work for a deputy sheriff in a machine shed. Besides, Harve's feeling a little techy. It's the sun."

Shorty wagged his head solemnly. "Yeh, sure has been right hot today."

He stood up slowly, shifting the cud of his tobacco.

"Well, I'll mosey along. Got some of my own work to do."

He drove away, wrapped in a dust cloud, carrying with him



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his speculations which, garnished and elaborated, would be served out to his clients when the time was ripe.

"All right, brats. In you go." My father motioned to the car.

We climbed in, Evelyn and I settling ourselves in the front seat, the three boys in the back. Before starting the engine my father leaned out to speak to Mrs. Shannon.

"Don't worry about Harve. I expect you know better than I do that he's liable to go off the deep end sometimes."

At that moment we heard a yell from the direction of the machine shed. "Get a hump on, you shovellers. We ain't got all day." Then Harve himself appeared from behind the shed, and seeing us on the edge of departure, took off his sombrero and waved it over his head. "Adios!" he shouted. "Adios, Harve, adios," we howled in return.

"You see, he's better already."

My father was thoughtful as we drove along, then his eyes wrinkled at the corners in sudden mirth, and he started to chuckle.

"My, oh my!" he said. "All our hard work for nothing."

He began to tell us the story. That morning in Fort Garland, Harve had heard rumours that the Federal agents were planning a raid on the valley and all adjacent ranches in a search for bootleg alcohol.

"What's bootleg?" and "What's a Federal agent?" we asked in chorus and my father said, "Gently, gently."

He stopped the car by the red gate, surveying the dark verdancy of his favourite alfalfa field with a proud gaze.

"Beautiful!" he said. "We'll have three cuttings from that stand."

I pulled at his sleeve impatiently. "Oh, Daddy, go on, please. Tell us the rest."

He rubbed his nose, looking a little embarrassed.

"Well," he said, "a bootlegger is somebody who sells beer when he shouldn't."

"Then you're a bootlegger," said Turner in surprise.

"Of course he isn't," Evelyn looked at her cousin indignantly. "He doesn't sell it, he just makes it."

"Oh, I see. But what's a Federal agent?"

"He is a gentleman employed by the United States Government to find the bootleggers."

"But if you're not a bootlegger, why should you worry? Is Harve a bootlegger? Is that why he threw all his beer into the stream?"

"No, Harve isn't a bootlegger either."

"Is Shorty?" asked Grant. "He keeps a barrel of beer in back of the store. I've seen it."

"Shorty? Why!—ah——"

He pointed suddenly, interrupting himself. "Look at that red-winged blackbird, quick. Too late, he's gone."

Grant had been doggedly pursuing his train of thought.

"I suppose Shorty couldn't be a bootlegger and a sheriff too, unless he's breaking the law twice."

My father was leaning forward to stare into the trees that edged the stream.

"You know," he said softly, "if we sit here long enough we might see a deer come down to drink. They're low in the hills this time of year."

"Oh, let's wait and see," I cried eagerly, delighted to be sidetracked. But my father straightened up on the seat.

"No," he said determinedly, "I must get back."

He looked round with his familiar, twinkling smile.

"As a matter of fact, any of us who make beer or gin or the funny stuff we like to drink are breaking the law. But, you see, it's a silly law and many wiser men than your old dad and uncle think the same thing." He looked pensive, as though considering the advisability of his anarchy.

"But if the Federal agents had come here would they have put you and Harve in jail?"

"Oh, I don't think so, but we would have had to pay them some money and they would have taken away all our bottles."

"And Harve's barrels too! Gosh, that would have been a job!"

Turner grinned happily at the idea.

"Then you hid all your bottles!" said Grant.

"Yes," replied my father a trifle sheepishly. "And your

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mother's too. First we took a load up into the attic through Evelyn's closet. Old butter-fingers Roy dropped one and broke it and we sprinkled creosote all around so her room wouldn't smell of the stuff. Then we loaded everything else into Sunshine and drove as far as we could go into the woods near the vegetable garden where we left it buried under some branches. All that hullabaloo you saw of animals was so that Sunshine's tyre marks would be covered up. Now, does that explain everything?"

"Not quite," said Turner. "What about the cellar?"

"Everything there, and there isn't much, more's the pity, was made before this law ever came into operation, so it couldn't be touched."

We were satisfied.

Turner aimed his usual imaginary gun.

"Bang-bang! There goes a Federal agent."

"Oh, I don't think we'd have bothered shooting them," said my father mildly. "We might really get into trouble if we hit one. Besides, they'd only be doing their duty."

Chal, who as the youngest had been listening in bemused silence, popped his head over the back of the seat, looking at my father from wide, dark eyes.

"Uncle Bryant, will those fish really die?"

My father smiled. "No, I don't think they will. But I wouldn't be surprised if a few of them won't get just a little bit drunk!"

We watched the return of all alcoholic beverages from their hiding places, feeling content and worldly-wise. Despite my father's words concerning agents, we placed them definitely in our minds alongside the less pleasing aspects of life, like school. A visit to the stream down at The Farm revealed nothing but broken glass and Chal was never able to find an intoxicated fish. Harve seemed his normal self, hearty and good-natured, but the barrels in the tractor shed fumed no more that summer.

## XII

### TENDERFEET

IN MY eleventh year it was discovered that Aunt Edith's chronic heart condition had reached a stage which might make it impossible for her to continue living in the high altitude of either Trinchera or Colorado Springs unless she rested for a year or two in a different climate. Consequently, she closed her Broadmoor house and moved east to Baltimore with my three cousins.

I missed them all deeply, particularly Turner, and moped about the deserted house on Trinchera trying to understand my feelings, chief of which was one of apprehension. When my father told me the house had been rented for the summer to a family from New York, I awaited their coming with faint hostility, disliking the idea of strangers occupying what was virtually my second home. The principal figure among Aunt Edith's prospective tenants was Major Allen Pinkerton, an acquaintance of my father, who had been badly gassed during the war and, finding the Colorado air beneficial to his lungs, had been making periodic visits to the State. This time he was bringing his son Bob, his sister, Mrs. Gibb, and her two sons, "Babe" and Lewis, and two more boys, all of them between the ages of fifteen and eighteen.

"Hear they's a buncha' dudes comin' to stay," Harve said to me. "The old man'll have to send 'em out on the range, learn 'em some cow-sense."

I listened to this suggestion with growing misgivings. Dudes riding herd on the summer round-up! It was unthinkable!

"Oh, they probably don't even know how to ride," I said airily, thinking with jealous possessiveness of each of the saddle-horses in turn, in particular Monk, my pony of the moment.

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Queenie was too small and too locoed and Pokey now had a foal, but as a good cow-pony there was a distinct possibility that Monk might be recruited for use by the invaders, and I toyed with the idea of hiding him in one of the lower meadows or up among the piñons. Luckily, my father noted the sombre expression on my face and wisely enlisted my help in making out a list of available saddle-horses. To my great relief, Monk was not included.

A few days before the Pinkertons and their entourage were due to appear, a Chinese cook arrived by the early morning train to take charge in what I still thought of stubbornly as Mrs. Glyn's kitchen. In spite of myself, I began to feel interested, never having seen a Chinese before, and deliberately rode past Aunt Edith's house several times during the course of one morning in the hope that I might catch sight of him. The doors and windows stood open and smoke rose from the chimney. Perhaps, I thought with lessening gloom, it might not be so bad. Suddenly the cook appeared on the front porch, vigorously shaking out a dust-cloth. He saw me and waved, his smile wide and friendly.

"Morning, velly fine day."

I returned his wave and nodded speechlessly, then overcome by shyness, kicked at Monk's sides and galloped off down the road as hard as I could go.

The visitors were expected by car soon after lunch on a day late in June, and I faced their coming with mingled feelings of excitement and dislike. It was my habit, on these occasions, to sit on the steps by the door leading from the living-room at the front of the house, watching for the usual dust cloud down the valley, but this time I stayed away, choosing instead to astonish Selma by offering to wipe the dishes, and was thus occupied when I heard the familiar hollow rumble of wheels on the wooden bridge denoting arrival.

For a time I lingered in the kitchen, hearing the confused sound of voices, then overcome by curiosity and still clutching my dish-towel, I ventured out into the patio, peering shyly around the corner of the house. My father spotted me and called me over and I went reluctantly, unable for a minute to look up from the cracked, stubby toes of my boots. When I did, it was to see

not the five (for I did not include adults in my secret hostility) enemies whom I had expected, but a row of smiling young gods, with short hair-cuts, and within the space of an hour I had fallen in love with all of them, showing a slight bias in favour of Bob who was the kindest and Babe who in my eyes was the handsomest. By the end of a week I was their devoted slave, proudly escorted them about the ranch, rode with them as official guide, and hung about whenever possible listening to conversations of school and rowing, football games and the theatre. I watched admiringly as they learned one by one with my father's help to rope and ride Western style, laughed with them over their obscure and, to me, meaningless jokes with a vicarious pleasure, listening wonderingly when they slapped themselves on their diaphragms and talked about "keeping in training."

In turn, they rewarded me with a form of gentle teasing which delighted my ten-year-old heart, spoiled me outrageously with presents of candy in fancy boxes from New York shops, and ended by giving me the nickname of "Sparkle." This alone would have been enough to destroy any lingering doubts in my mind, but I was already too far gone in calf love for the name to be anything but a final proof that my devotion was at least in part returned.

Our trip to the Monte Vista rodeo that summer was made doubly exciting by the fact of my collective, lop-sided romance and I walked proudly to our seats in the grandstand, quite forgetting that a year ago the bright "Western" garb of my five companions would have been listed in my mind as belonging to the "Monkey Ward" or drug-store cowboys whom I so despised. Only one thing happened to cast a slight shade over my day and that was when the boys stayed behind to attend the Monte Vista dance, thereby emphasising the difference in our ages, and relegating me to the hateful position of the youngest member.

Not long afterwards, however, something else occurred which came near to blighting my love affair. I discovered a silk handkerchief lying on the grass near the swimming-pool and took it away with me, certain that it belonged to Babe. That night I

slept with it under my pillow, and on waking in the morning my first move was to caress it with sentimental fingers, admiring the rich silk and the pattern of yellow horses' heads on a purple background, a gaudiness which, again, I would have condemned as impossibly dude-like and *outré* before my eyes had been blinded by their present passion. I kept the handkerchief with me all day, placing it inside my middy blouse, a spot usually occupied by my pet horn-toad.

Towards sunset, Babe's mother, Mrs. Gibb, wandered into our living-room.

"Has anyone here seen my big silk handkerchief?" she asked. "A snappy purple one with yellow horse heads?"

My face grew hot and I said nothing, managing to creep out of the room unnoticed before betraying myself in a lie. Later in the evening I returned the handkerchief, stating off-handedly that I had found it on the grass. It merely added to my humiliation to be told that as a reward I might keep it and, after forcing enough gratitude into my voice to pass muster, I rushed home and buried the unwanted gift deeply in the corner of a drawer where it remained until my wounds had sufficiently healed to enable me to look on the gay silk without inwardly flinching.

A few days later, my father took the boys with him on the summer round-up, saying that two weeks of riding the range and hog-tying calves would make good cow-punchers of them. Major Pinkerton concurred heartily, adding the somewhat harsh injunction that they were to forgo any special treatment which might let them off their duties lightly. The boys listened, one or two of them with superior smiles, and I watched them anxiously, feeling protective, for I was sure they could not fully understand what lay in store for them. My father, I knew, would be kind, but he would also be firm, and Harve Shannon as range boss would permit no slacking. The round-up was the big event of the year, but it was also a matter involving endurance, skill and hard labour.

I watched the preparations enviously, pleading as usual with my father to be taken along, but without hope, since it was understood that a range camp was no place for women and

children. To my astonished joy, he agreed to let me spend two nights in camp, half-way through the round-up.

"I'll take Monk along," he said, "and you can help Cheese wrangle the horses." He turned to smile at my sister. "My big daughter can stay home and look after the other dudes."

On this occasion he was by no means showing favouritism in giving me permission to stay while withholding it from my sister, no doubt considering that as a child I would be of little real inconvenience in the routine of the cow-camp existence. Evelyn, on the other hand, was at fourteen tall and very attractive, and her appearance was a disturbing factor to be reckoned with since not only the boys but the cowhands as well looked upon her with favour. Although too consumed with selfish delight to feel more than a fleeting remorse that she was not to share my pleasure, I was at the same time vaguely aware that in my success there lay also my defeat. My sister was a far better candidate for romance than I, and permission to go to camp was merely an indication of my true status—a harmless, unimportant ten-year-old!

The following week, early one morning, my stepmother, Major Pinkerton, Mrs. Gibb, Evelyn and I set off for the summer range, which lay forty miles away and ten thousand feet up. We took the road past the Game Park, turning off half-way up La Veta Pass on to a rough track that wound upwards through the heavy timber. There was no actual road, merely two wagon-ruts. The cow outfit rode up to the range by another route, leading pack-horses and driving the spare mounts ahead, and it was unusual for a car to make the journey.

I rode in front with Cheese, who was driving Sunshine, the Dodge truck, its compartment loaded with Monk's saddle and bridle, the pup-tent in which I would sleep, a hatchet and shovel, two bed-rolls and a large quantity of groceries, including several dozen eggs. Behind, Roy Schoonover drove the others, Major Pinkerton peering through the windscreen like an affable hawk.

We crawled along slowly in second gear, passing from sunlit glades, where the aspen leaves flickered from green to silver, into



the cool shadows of woods, from time to time fording the clear swiftness of a mountain brook.

Cheese was worried about his eggs.

"Shore looks like them old cackleberries'll be scrambled by the time we git to camp. What for a buncha cowhands needs aigs anyhow? Seems to me a mess'a beans and flapjacks is plenty without you gotta have aigs."

He seemed disgruntled, probably because he was not out riding with the others but had been instead delegated to fetch the supplies, and, what was worse, told to keep an eye on me during the next two days.

We climbed higher, bumping over the tangled roots of low-growing shrubs, scrub oak, chokecherries and kinnikinnick, stopping occasionally to wait while Cheese and Roy pulled aside a barrier of fallen branches. As the noise of our labouring engines died away we became aware of the enormous silence and solitude around us, a silence which was at the same time almost tangible and breathing; a solitude that, by the lovely contradiction of Nature, was not solitude, but filled with a thousand sounds if our ears could only hear them. I stared into the trees, hoping to catch a movement that betrayed the presence of a deer, a porcupine or a badger. This was bear country too, but I knew that our loud approach would have sent most of the animals into terrified flight long before we caught up with them. A chipmunk skittered across the smooth highway of a fallen tree trunk and with a harsh squawk of indignation a camp-robber flew past with a flash of blue wings.

We moved on, stopping only once more where a spring flood had washed out the faint traces of the road, leaving a tumbled confusion of small boulders which had to be cleared away. After steadily climbing for another half-hour we came out of the timber into a wonderful upland meadow where the long sweep of pale grass was patterned by countless flowers—purple-blue columbine, wild yellow pea, the bruised petals of creamy mariposa lilies, four o'clock, meadow lotus, gentians—anemones——

"Oh, stop the car, Cheese. Stop!"

I wanted to fill my eyes, to run, to shout, to roll in the fragrant

rich-patterned growth. We crowded together on the brow of the gentle slope leading to the meadow, staring at the swathe of colour, the almost pastoral effect of rippling grass and blossom, only the presence in groups of twos and threes of dark green spruce trees and the matted carpet of tiny alpine flowers betraying the fact that we were ten thousand feet above sea level.

Cheese was peering across the wide park-land with a business-like eye. "Reckon they done gathered the cattle around here. They be workin' the timber today. Look, camp lies over yonder."

He pointed to where smoke plumed up into the sky.

"Looks like Soapy's a-waitin' for these here cackleberries."

Soapy was the camp cook, a gloomy, bent-shouldered elderly man who turned up each year seemingly out of nowhere, in time for the round-ups.

Cheese climbed back into Sunshine.

"Everybody ready? Let's go!"

He swept off his Stetson hat and beat it down on the steering wheel hard. "Ride 'er, Powder River!" he screeched, then let out a long triumphant howl ending with a "Yipce, yow—ow!"

We raced downhill and across the wide meadow, crushing the grass and flowers with cruel wheels, while the others followed more sedately in our tracks.

Except for Soapy, the camp was deserted. It lay in a narrow valley between two ridges, one which we had just descended from the meadow, the other steeper and thickly covered with a dense growth of blue spruce, Douglas fir and yellow pine. Down the centre ran a stream, deep and narrow, its banks bright with thick clusters of gold-flowers and king-cup. The branding corrals sloped down from the timber's edge while the cook's tent and a small one which I recognised as my father's stood at the head of the valley, surrounded by a scattering of bed-rolls belonging to the cowhands. Beyond these grazed the cow-ponies and park-horses and I spotted Monk among them. Every cow-puncher had two, sometimes three ponies to ride during a round-up,

alternating from day to day, so that each weary animal could have its quota of rest.

Soapy greeted us with a laconic, "Howdy, folks," then disappeared into his tent, obviously not willing to lower himself by small-talk with chuds and strangers. He poked his head out for a minute to say crossly, "You better git up there and wrangle your horses, Cheese, that old bell-mare sure is a had actor. She came down here this morning and trump all over my biscuit fixin's. I tell you, I hired on for a cook, not no horse jingler."

"Aw, quit yore bellerin', Soapy," said Cheese. "Done brung you some cackleberries."

We ate our lunch beside the stream, washing it down with some of Soapy's coffee, whose bitter taste was only partially disguised by condensed milk, or "canned cow," as he called it. It was still and peaceful and the water chuckled past, the long meadow-grass that hung from the bank dipping and floating on the stream's surface.

After lunch, while the others wandered off to pick flowers except for Major Pinkerton who had brought his fishing-rod and now walked up-stream to look for trout, I climbed to the top of a ridge behind the camp, stopping *en route* to speak to Monk. My objective was a high vantage point from which I could watch for the arrival of the cows which were due to appear at the corrals, according to the usual curriculum, between three and four o'clock. I lay flat on my stomach in the grass, breathing in the resinous tang of the pine trees and amusing myself by popping the delicate sections of Indian pipe, the slender weed that grew around me in the grass. I smelled the satisfying odour of my own sweat and listened dreamily to the faint tinkle from the direction of the grazing horses as the hobbled bell-mare moved slowly from place to place.

After a time I turned over on my back, lying with my arms stretched out, the sun on my face, feeling drowsy and utterly content. The sky was a vivid, translucent blue, depthless and without cloud. I shut my eyes and dozed for a little and then suddenly sat up, straining my ears to listen. Yes, there it was! A far-off confused murmur, like distant water, increasing gradu-

ally in volume until I could distinguish shouts and the despairing bellow of cows calling to their calves. I jumped to my feet and ran down the hill, scattering the horses and shouting at the top of my voice, "They're coming! They're coming!"

Evelyn and I perched on the corral fence watching the timber at the far end of the valley, listening to the moaning lament of the cattle as they drew closer, hearing the high-pitched calling of the riders, waiting excitedly for the first sight of the herd between the close-set trees. There came a crashing near at hand and a calf burst out of the undergrowth on the hillside closely pursued by a cow-puncher whom I recognised as Jeronimo, a big man, half-Mexican, half-Negro, who rode like a centaur and was considered the best roper in the outfit.

Now the sound filled the valley with a swelling moan and the first cows emerged from the trees, spilling down the ridge in a growing tide of red and white, coming slowly, coming reluctantly, chivvied on by the riders, the pattern of their approach breaking and re-forming as they jostled together through the timber.

"Sook! Sook! Git on down there. Ay, ya-aa! Yip! Yip! Yow! Move them critters! Hi-hi-hi!"

The barking, singing calls rang like a strange music through the valley, sounding out above the droning obbligato of the cattle. The herd, five hundred or more cows and calves with a sprinkling of muley steers and here and there a curly-polled range bull, lowering and truculent, came on in a slow flood, turned with a great collective movement into the narrows of the corral gates, crowding and pushing, their eyes wide with fear. The shouts rose frenziedly. "Haze 'em in! Aah! You shadbelliced critters. Push along! Push along!"

My father rode over to speak to us. He wore chaps, his teeth shone whitely through a week's beard, and the band of his Stetson was dark with sweat.

"Big day," he said. "We'll have to work till it's dark. There must be two hundred calves to brand."

I saw Bob Pinkerton and the other boys, looking tired and very dirty, their faces strained and unsmiling. It was obvious they had been working hard and that their status of "greenhorn"

had weakened considerably. I gazed at them tenderly, then forgot them in the excitement of the scene before me. The cattle were coming down through a long division between two corrals, prodded into unwilling movement by sharp sticks inserted through the rails of the corrals. At the end of this lane-like opening a cowhand waited, separating the cows from their calves through gates which lay directly opposite each other. Mothers and children raised frightened, bellowing voices higher until the hillsides echoed with their grief.

It took nearly an hour to separate them all, and then, against a background of wailing frustration, the work of branding, castrating and ear-marking began. Only two riders remained on their horses, Jeronimo and another man. They rode into the corral where the calves huddled together at the far end, their ropes coiled and ready to throw. Jeronimo was riding one of the Montana horses, a big, blue-roan gelding with a rump that gleamed like polished pewter. I remembered this horse as he had been before Del Owens had broken him in and admired the way in which he manoeuvred a calf from the herd, selecting it with a sureness that seemed to have nothing to do with Jeronimo's guiding hand. The calf, a little bull, galloped away clumsily; the rope skimmed through the air, catching it around a hind foot and throwing it to the ground. Instantly, the roan stopped, backing slightly, giving to the tautness of the rope just enough to prevent the calf, which was standing again, from being dragged. Another cow-puncher ran across and threw himself on the calf's neck, twisting its head so that it lost balance and toppled over, and a third sat on the ground holding it down by its back leg, after releasing the rope. Jeronimo, his part done, moved off to rope another calf, and Harve, a knife in hand, bent down to nick the calf's ear with our mark, then with quick slashes castrated the unhappy, small animal. I saw Babe watching, his face pale under the dirt, and I sympathised secretly, although I would never show my dislike of what I knew to be a necessary piece of surgery.

"Oh, the poor thing," said Mrs. Gibb. "I suppose it's got to be done, but it seems so cruel."

Her bright, black eyes grew bigger and she stared again, looking even more affronted as my father approached with a red-hot iron and stooping over the calf, stamped its flank with our brand  $\perp$  (inverted T—slash) amid a hiss and a stench of burning hair and flesh. My father always did the branding since it required a sure touch. Any uneven pressure of the iron could result in a dangerous wound and would only inflict extra suffering to the calf as well as spoil the outline of the brand. The calf uttered a strangled bellow of pain which quickly died away as, freed by his captors, he got slowly to his feet and walked off stiff-legged to join his companions.

All afternoon the pattern of quick torture repeated itself as calf after calf submitted to iron and knife. The odour of burning grew stronger, the tired, sad voices moaned continuously; the faces of the men grew strained and exhausted; the dust from hundreds of hooves choked the clear air. We brought cups of coffee and Harve drank his quickly, legs astride. Like the others, he had been at work since five o'clock that morning, but he grinned at me. "Cheese bring up the aigs?"

When I said he had, Harve's smile broadened. "Sure gonna be a nice change from Soapy's freeholies."

He meant beans, but used a word popular among cowhands, a distorted version of the Mexican *frijoles*.

My father's eyes were bloodshot and weary. He glanced up to where the sun hung low over the mountains. Already half the valley was in shadow and the air was cooling rapidly.

"You'd better start home," he said to my stepmother, "if you want to beat the night down the mountains."

I watched the car depart, feeling proud and a little superior, then went back to my perch on the corral fence, arriving in time to see Harve giving one of the boys a lesson in calf-roping.

By sunset the job was done and the cattle streamed out of the corrals, mothers and children reunited, secure again for a little time until with the spring they would once again be rounded up, this time, alas, to be shipped to the Denver stock-yards for prime beef. The riders scattered them to feed in a part of the range where they would be little likely to mix with the cattle which,

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unaware, would tomorrow live through the same experience; and as the last cow disappeared up the coulees, and the last sweaty horse had been released to roll happily on the cool grass, a huge peace descended upon the valley. The air smelled of dew and the first stars began to scintillate in a sky deep-piled as velvet.

"Come and get it!" howled Soapy from the cook-tent, and beat an iron spoon against the back of his frying-pan.

We ate from tin plates on a long plank table. I sat next to my father, stuffing fried meat and potatoes into my mouth, feeling my eyes beginning to droop. Soapy hovered by the fire, a corn-cob pipe jutting from one corner of his lips. From time to time he grumpily distributed more food from the dutch-oven, muttering as though he considered each one of us to be more than necessarily gluttonous. Harve looked down the table, lit by the fire and the dancing light of a storm-lantern, and said genially, "Well, boys, they's hen-fruit for breakfast."

I felt a little ashamed. Hen-fruit was not really one of Harve's words, and I knew that he was showing off before the tenderfeet. But it was part of his charm that he recognised himself from time to time to be a "character," especially as he seldom exploited it save on an occasion like this one or in front of a pretty woman.

"Uncle," spoke up Cheese from somewhere down the table. "You shore say some funny things. Now cackleberries is different. Everybody says cackleberries."

After supper my father took my hand and guided me down to the stream to wash. I felt this to be somewhat unnecessary as no one else seemed to be doing it. We stood for a minute, listening to the stream and the silence of the mountains. My father pointed to where eyes gleamed yellow across the meadow, gleamed and were gone.

"Might be a bob-cat," he said.

I stumbled back up the hill, protesting that I did not want to go to bed yet, that I wanted to talk to Bob and Babe. My father chuckled. "You'll have to wake 'em up if you do," he said, and showed me a long row of sausage-like forms where the boys were already rolled in their sleeping-bags. A few minutes

later, removing only my boots, I was snug in my own bedding, the canvas walls of my pup-tent close about me.

My father stooped to kiss me. "Tomorrow's another day," he said gently. "Sleep well, little mutt."

I lay for a minute, aware of the immense quietness on every side, then worked my way out of the sleeping-bag to peer for a minute, on my hands and knees, through the tent-slit. The fire burned steadily and seated next to it I saw Jeronimo, his dark face frowning over a saddle-strap which he was mending. He caught the movement of my tent-flap and glanced up, nodding at me expressionlessly. It was as close as we ever came to speaking.

Soapy's clamour next morning roused me from a deep, restful sleep.

"Come an' get it!"

Looking out, I saw with chagrin that everyone else was already gathered at the table.

After a huge meal of fried eggs-cackleberries-hen-fruit, baking-powder biscuits and coffee, I watched the horses being wrangled from the hillside. The air was very cold and night still lingered in the draws.

Harve rubbed his hands together. "Some of them cayuses gonna have to be uncorked today."

He was right. The ponies, refreshed by their rest, humped their backs and resisted the saddle in a stiff-legged side-stepping motion. Jeronimo, whose horse today was a wiry flea-bitten grey, mounted and immediately went off down the hillside, riding beautifully as the animal leaped and plunged and the men called, "Iron him out, Jeronimo! You're sittin' pretty. Fan him, boy, fan him!"

Now it was Del Owens's turn and as Cheese said admiringly, "He sure did peel that horse good." One by one the men rode out of camp and I followed along on Monk, riding beside my father, the boys close at hand. I glanced back at them, thinking critically that they would never ride like Del or Jeronimo, or even Cheese. Oh, inconstant love!

After half an hour, I was ordered back, Cheese accompanying me without much grace. I spent the morning fishing in com-



panionable silence with Soapy, our luck being so good that we caught between us five brook and one rainbow trout which we ate for lunch fried with bacon in a pan set directly over the fire.

Afterwards, I roamed the woods for a time, studying the darting movements of two red squirrels in a big yellow pine, and then climbed to my place of vigilance behind the camp, lying once more in the grass, waiting for the first distant sound of the approaching herd. Once I got up and walked to where I could see the next range beyond the upland meadow, knowing that beyond that lay another and beyond that the peaks of Blanca and Baldy. On the other side of these the ranges rolled on until they reached the plains and I tried to imagine them, wishing that my own life within these mountains could go on and on, consisting of sleeping and walking, riding and eating, sharing the work of the men, eating, sleeping, waking and riding again. Then I heard the far-off crying coming to me on the wind, and I turned and ran down towards the corrals.

The next day Roy came to fetch me—and I clung to my father for a minute, hating to leave him, hating to leave everything.

"Silly child, we'll be back in a week, and besides, Nessa [an Arabian mare] is due to foal any day now. You'll have to be there to see she's all right."

I departed feeling cheered and filled with anticipation. How could I have forgotten in such a short space of time all that awaited me at home? But it was always like that during my childhood on Trinchera. I lived through the division of days and events with such intensity that each one comprised a tiny lifetime, constantly changing, constantly renewing itself until it seemed that I could and would exist for ever in a timeless environment.

On my eleventh birthday the Pinkertons gave a party for me with a cake made by the Chinese cook, poems composed for the occasion and presents from everyone. They drank a toast to "Sparkle," and flushed and excited to a point of hysteria, I mounted my chair and offered a speech of thanks, which came

to nothing, for, overcome by emotion, I found I had nothing to say.

A week later they left for New York, and I went down to Fort Garland to see them off on the evening train. Evelyn was accompanying them as far as New York on her way to boarding school in Connecticut. She looked pretty but strange in a hat and a dark dress and I looked at her wistfully, sensing perhaps that this departure was the end of something for both of us. The slight envy I had felt on knowing that she was to be the companion of my erstwhile loves, voyaging with them into a new world which she would learn to see through their eyes, left me altogether and I hugged her hard, begging her to come back soon.

Far down the track the engine's headlights appeared and I watched fearfully, anticipating the growing roar, the hiss and the clang as the monster rushed down upon us. The Mexicans began drifting towards the track, divided in their curiosity between us and the train's arrival. The red eye of the headlight glowed larger and suddenly the train was there, panting with a great breath, the steam rising whitely in the air.

I watched them climb in one by one, saw their faces as they appeared briefly to wave from the windows. My sister was smiling a little, but I knew with sudden clarity how mixed must be her feelings. The train shuddered, backing slightly, the wheels turned faster as it moved down the track, and now there was only the conductor's lantern swinging back and forth from the observation platform. The noise of the engine faded slowly as it rounded a bend towards Ute Creek, and the whistle sounded in the still air, a long, aching cry of farewell.

I sniffled, swallowing shameful tears, then felt my father's hand on my shoulder.

"Let's go," he said. "You sit in front with me. If we're lucky, we might see a coyote cross our headlights on the way home."

### XIII

#### TURNER

THE "COLTISH AGE" through which girls are supposed to pass, especially in fiction, long-limbed and awkwardly charming, their eyes dewy with an inward vision of what it means to be on the verge of womanhood, was never, alas, my lot. At thirteen I was solid and even lumpish. I still wore my hair in a ragged "Dutch" hair-cut, my smile exposed glittering gold bands that crossed my upper teeth like suspension bridges; I bit my nails and suffered from warts, and, to cap it all, I now wore owlsh spectacles which, while they showed me a new world of distance and enchantment that for a year had only been a blur, did nothing to improve my appearance.

Furthermore, months of increasing near-sightedness, unsuspected by my family, had induced certain feelings of inferiority which lingered with me for many years. Since I could no longer read the blackboard, my school-report card suffered an ignoble change. I was late to music lessons because, unable to see the name of its destination, I was constantly boarding the wrong street car and, being too inhibited to confess my mistake, would often ride for miles in a direction quite opposite to the one in which I wished to go. I scuffled my way to school slowly, dreading lessons, hating my teachers, afraid to join in the games. In fact, fear was often uppermost in my feelings, and one of its chief causes was a log which crossed a stream in the path leading to school—I would hang back until certain there was no one to see me, then would crawl over the slippery wood on my hands and knees, arriving sometimes long after the school had rung for the first classes.

It was an interval of spiritual collapse; during which I thought

ceaselessly of Trinchera, begging my father to take me with him, longing for the comforting indifference of the mountains, the uncritical animals and, above all, the timeless quality of existence.

When my misfortune was eventually discovered and I was fitted with glasses, I wore them with such constancy that they seemed almost to have grown on my face. If I did remove them, which was only in bed at night, their absence revealed an encircling pattern of white skin around my eyes like a second pair of spectacles, and my deeply sunburned nose jutted out in exaggerated bas-relief. Yet none of this would have amounted to any real importance if it had not been for the fact that the Schley family was this summer returning to Trinchera and that Turner would see me for the first time with my undesirable appendage. For there was no doubt of it, my feelings towards this early comrade who had shared for so long both my real and my fantasy life had not altered and the Pinkerton affair by comparison had been unsubstantial and quickly over. At the same time, I was apprehensive of the changes which contact with a wider world—the world of the East—might have wrought in Turner, and that I, his former close companion, might now, particularly with glasses, fall far short of his brand-new standards.

My fears were not without foundation, for Evelyn too had changed after two years away in boarding-school, spending more and more time visiting Colorado Springs, going to parties and consorting with "men" who went to Princeton, Yale and Harvard. Sometimes she invited a houseful of boys and girls to stay on Trinchera and I looked upon them with awe, the quality of my shyness having altered since the days of the Pinkerton boys—themselves members of this fascinating hierarchy—from naïveté to painful self-consciousness. Furthermore, I had recently become aware of "culture," the result of my stepmother's resolute efforts, but in my confused mind I somehow associated higher learning solely with going away to school and college, imagining that any of my sister's friends, in particular the males, who attended the big eastern universities must be paragons of scholarship.

On one memorable occasion I found myself alone in the back

of a car with one of these visiting luminaries, a "man" of eighteen, a little pimply, to be sure, but tall, handsome and with just the amount of disdain and indifference which I had expected of him. He acknowledged my presence with a grunt, then appeared to forget about me, which I recognised with humility was as it should be. Nevertheless, I was consumed with desire to make the most of what I felt to be a unique opportunity. Somehow I must force an impression and since it could obviously not be by my looks or age, it must be by my intellect.

The silence between us lengthened, then, rising from somewhere inside my foolish brain to burst on my lips like a bubble, came a question which I felt qualified for the exceptional circumstances.

"Do you believe in reincarnation?" I blurted.

My patron turned his head, staring at me with eyes in which there was a growing bewilderment. Then his admirably -cut jaw dropped a little.

"Huh?" he asked.

I knew immediately I had said the wrong thing, blaming myself for having attempted a conversation about a subject concerning which I knew absolutely nothing, if the truth be told, save that I had heard vaguely one could somehow return to life in a different guise, possibly as an animal, and had thought that it might not be a bad idea to become, myself, a horse. Fortunately, the drive came to an end and I was able to retire quickly from the scene of my disgrace.

Where Turner was concerned, I did not so much fear his advanced intellectual powers—he was, after all, only a few months older than I—as the possibility of his looking upon what we had formerly considered important with a different and superior gaze. Would he, for instance, still like to play Cowboys and Outlaws?

It was a clear day late in June when the Schleys were due to arrive. I had spent the morning lying on the grass in a meadow where the mares and foals were pastured, imagining the car with Aunt Edith and the boys as it rolled along the familiar route from Colorado Springs, trying to see through Turner's eyes each

well-known landmark, wondering how much it would have changed to him.

The foals, overwhelmed by a baby curiosity, assembled about my still form, from time to time plucking up enough courage to touch me with their soft noses, blowing out loud, inquisitive breaths! One of them even plucked my handkerchief from my pocket and galloped away on stilt-like legs, the handkerchief streaming like a banner from its mouth.

During lunch it rained briefly, enough to lay the dust and clear the air. Towards three o'clock I wandered down to sit on the bridge near the stables, my feet dangling over the stream. I wore my best and cleanest pair of khaki breeches, a boy's white shirt and a red necktie, tightly knotted. Only a few inches below my boots the creek ran swift and inviting, and for a moment I considered wading in the shallow part, overcome by a sudden desire to feel the smooth coldness of the pebbles and the rush of water against my bare feet. But I controlled the wish, remembering that I must stay tidy, contenting myself with throwing twigs into the water, watching to see if they would make the perilous journey under the bridge to reappear on the other side.

Following the rain, the air was sweetened by the perfume of wild roses that grew thickly in the tangled brush beside the stream, and I inhaled it deep into my lungs. From the new corral behind our granary came a wild burst of neighing and I remembered with pleasure that here at least was something which I could present to Turner for his approval. The year before, in a gesture of gratitude and generosity, Major Pinkerton had given my father a thoroughbred stallion named Red, the colour of dark copper, an animal so beautiful, gentle mannered and intelligent that it was difficult to consider him merely as a horse. Indeed, the relationship between Red and my father had that amorphous quality sometimes to be found between man and beast, in which the chief ingredient is love, equally divided. My father would stand for long moments talking to Red, caressing the arched, glistening neck, soothing him with quiet words and feeding him lump sugar which the stallion took with quick, soft lips, butting his head against my father as though in

thanks. This year's crop of foals had mainly been sired by Red for, with his arrival, my father was able to realise one of his fondest wishes, that of raising polo ponies which were half-thoroughbred, half-Arabian and, although we already owned two or three, had purchased Arab mares from as far away as England and New Hampshire. There were two other stallions as well, Rahzia, a chestnut Arab with a blazed face, and Defense, an elegant and occasionally fierce boarder, whose function it was to spread thoroughbred blood throughout that part of the State. The arrangement had been made between the U.S. Government Remount Organisation and my father, part of whose duties it was to act as judge in the Remount races which took place every year in both Washington and Colorado Springs.

Altogether, we had about one hundred head of horses, and it was my job to name the new foals for entry in the New York Jockey Club books, and to keep a journal in which the dates of conception and birth were duly recorded, together with an accurate description down to the faintest mark of every new arrival. I took my work very seriously and read copiously about the history of the horse, from three-toed prehistoric specimens through the Darley Arabian to our own time. I also studied a large volume called *The Diseases of the Horse*, and was once able to save a large number of animals from destruction by discovering in time the presence of our greatest dread as stock-breeders, that of foot-and-mouth disease. It was a period of my life when Rosa Bonheur and her rolling-eyed brutes would have been objects for my contempt, since, apart from a deep-lying sentimental attachment, my attitude towards horses was in the main knowledgeable and businesslike.

Red neighed again, and I knew from the heightened excitement in his call that some of the brood-mares had drifted up from pasture, and were flirting with him coyly from a distance.

I threw another twig into the water. "Copper Red by Rancocas out of Heely."

Red's immediate pedigree began to run through my mind like a poem I knew by heart.

"Rancocas out of Heely, Rancocas out of Heely——"

Then I heard the grump-grump of wheels on the cattle-stile and knew with a sudden lurching sensation in my stomach that the Schleys must have come.

I did not move from the bridge, did not even turn my head to look up the hill towards the garage, unable to face the moment for which I had waited with such combined longing and apprehension. Someone called my name and I stood up, then saw a figure running down the hill past the ice-house.

"Hey! Florrie! Where are you?"

I felt puzzled. It was a man's voice calling. Then suddenly I understood and began to run, grinning foolishly, delight growing with every step.

We met by the gate, giving each other a clumsy embrace over the top bars.

"Turner! Your voice has changed!"

"Yes, I know. Isn't it funny?"

This time his voice broke treacherously, rising from a hoarse bass to a falsetto and I laughed before I could stop myself. He reddened, and I realised then what I should have long before—Turner too must have been experiencing the same feelings of uncertainty over our reunion as I.

"Aren't my glasses awful?" I said quickly.

He looked at me affectionately.

"Old four-eyes," he said, grinning, and I grinned back, filled with relief and loving him more than ever.

When, after a tour of inspection, he proposed a game of Cowboys and Outlaws for the following day, I was completely satisfied, feeling that nothing had altered between us.

Cowboys and Outlaws was a game which we had played every summer for years. It was one of our own making with astringent regulations and a pattern of behaviour from which we never swerved, since the punishment was to be temporarily ostracised. In a way, the game represented the testing-ground for each of us, involving not only a code of morals to which we must adhere but also requiring physical endurance. We would set out in the morning with our sandwich lunch rolled in the yellow slickers tied behind our saddles, for neither cloud-burst,



hail nor electric storms ever deterred us, sometimes not returning home until after dark.

At an agreed point in the foothills we stopped to choose sides, the standard number of players being four cowboys, four outlaws. With the addition of visiting children, we seldom had any difficulty in making up teams, and could, as a last resort, enlist Misstar, Nanalee Shannon or Chick.

Our next step would be to pick our weapons, this being literally accomplished by hunting for those portions of dead piñon branches most resembling the shape of revolvers. When each of us was armed, the outlaws were given half an hour's start, the cowboys remaining under oath not to observe in which direction their enemies departed, for pursuit and ultimate capture relied mostly on the cowboys' ability to follow a trail. This was not easy, since all forms of disguise were permitted, such as dragging a slicker over tell-tale hoof-marks, riding up the middle of a stream, over grass, or back-tracking extensively in order to make it as difficult as possible for the pursuer to read the pattern of escape on the stony slopes.

Sometimes the cowboys would trail the outlaws all day, the chase reaching a crescendo of excitement when the outlaws would be spotted a mile away, disappearing over a ridge which the cowboys could not reach for another twenty minutes or more. If overtaken, the outlaws dismounted from their horses and hid themselves in order to ambush their pursuers. Victory for either side now depended on shooting one another, the required firing-range being ten feet, at which point a shouted "Bang-bang! You're dead!" finished the matter. The trouble was that we could not always agree on the prescribed ten feet, and fierce arguments took place with Grant usually acting as arbitrator, no matter which side he was on.

We seldom had accidents, although during an over-zealous moment as an outlaw I attempted to baffle our trackers by leading the others down the side of a steep gully, pitched over my pony's head and rolled head over heels to the bottom, arriving slightly damaged but on the whole cheerful. We avoided rattlesnakes, warned in advance by the whirring sound of rattles and the

nervous snorting of our mounts. It was not unusual to see an indifferent porcupine ambling through the piñons, and one day the outlaws completely forgot about concealment, being absorbed in the doubtful pleasure of teasing a truculent badger. When the cowboys arrived to lend a hand, both sides were sent flying for their horses as the outraged animal turned upon them with angry snarls.

Remembering our past games, both Turner and I now looked forward eagerly to playing again after our long separation, but were met almost at once by defeat, for Grant shook his head firmly, announcing that he was going prairie-dog shooting.

"Besides, there aren't enough of us," he said with characteristic logic.

"What about Stewart Schoonover?" asked Chas, who had welcomed our plan delightedly.

The suggestion was vetoed immediately. Somehow, the idea of Stewart, now grown tall and bony, his eyes still vacant, his broad, pale face expressionless except when from time to time it stirred in the throes of a wan smile, repelled us, especially in connection with an activity which had been so close to our hearts.

Reluctantly, we abandoned the idea of Cowboys and Outlaws, and instead waged a bloody war on the miserable prairie-dogs, killing dozens of the small animals, although Grant, it was agreed, was the best shot among us. At the back of my mind I continued to hope that we might have at least one more game, but as the summer slipped by and no one suggested it again, I realised that this chapter of ranch life was now closed and some of my former uncertainty, mixed with a vague sadness, returned to plague me. But I said nothing of my feelings, not even to Turner, and followed the boys about, slaughtering as many prairie-dogs as I could, even though I secretly liked the little yellow-furred creatures and admired the courageous manner in which they attempted to defend their holes against our invasion. One afternoon I was severely bitten on the hand by a wounded prairie-dog, having shoved my arm to the elbow down a sandy burrow in an effort to drag out the tenant and end its

suffering with another bullet. The others made a fuss and talked about iodine, but I sucked at the wound with a display of nonchalance I did not feel and said that I considered the bite to be justified.

"I don't much like killing the poor things, anyway," I added rashly, knowing what the reaction to this remark would be.

"That's silly," said Grant. "Everyone knows they're vermin and destroy the crops. Why, they really are our enemies."

I conceded the point, but refused to shoot any more prairie-dogs, using my damaged hand as a reasonable excuse.

At this juncture of our lives we each possessed a lethal weapon, having graduated from "bee-bee" guns to .22 rifles. I found it strange, in the light of my feelings that summer, to remember how much I had wanted this gun and how carefully I had abided by the rules laid down by my father, oiling it and cleaning it carefully after each time of using. Now, I began to dislike the sight of the cold, blue-black steel and the polished stock, innocent of notches like those which the boys had scratched on theirs as evidence of success as hunters. Yet when my hand was healed, I once again took up my gun, this time turning it on magpies, hawks and cotton-tail rabbits which emerged from the sagebrush near sundown to feed in the rich grass along the bottom-land. I enjoyed these excursions after a fashion, for it was a delicious time of day and in the excitement of trying to aim at the fast-scattering rabbits no one was to know that most of the time I never even bothered to shoot. One evening, however, I was forced into showing my ability by the others, and managed to kill a rabbit with a single shot, amid cheers of congratulation. When, however, I skinned the little beast, a process for which I cared little, to find that it was a pregnant female and that I had destroyed six rabbits instead of one, I thrust the carcass wordlessly into Turner's hands and walked back to the house to ask my father if he would keep the rifle for me in his closet. He asked no questions, but put it carefully on the rack with his own assembly of weapons, and except for target-practice with a Luger pistol, which nearly knocked me over backwards, I never again fired a shot.

A few days later, Turner joined me in my self-imposed exile, although his decision had not been reached voluntarily, his rifle having been removed temporarily from his possession by way of punishment. The scene of his misadventure had been the Shannons' living-room where he and I were visiting the three girls one afternoon. I was slightly taken aback to discover that Turner's pleasure in going down to The Farm now lay solely in his desire to banter with Harve's three daughters, and when he went so far as to "show off" flagrantly, even boasting a little about his ability to use a rifle, I realised for the first time that I might not remain for ever his chosen female companion.

On this occasion, conversation from my point of view, had been singularly distasteful, comprised as it was of Turner's teasing words and the girls' shrieks of mirth. Blondie and Bobbie, now called by her real name, Pearl, I found especially obnoxious, and heard with relief Nanalee's calm voice telling her sisters to "quit that awful racket."

Turner got up to examine Harve's collection of old guns and Nanalee warned him to be careful, saying that one or two of them might still be loaded.

"Papa never lets us handle them," she said anxiously.

"I'll be careful," said Turner, sighting along the barrel of a big rifle. I noticed his finger touch the trigger automatically and there was a sudden crashing explosion, terrifyingly loud within the limits of the low-ceilinged room, and we saw that a large ragged hole had appeared in the wall over the fire-place. For a moment we stared, too frightened to move, while Turner, white with fear, stood looking down at the gun with a horrified expression.

In the ensuing rumpus it was generally agreed that Harve should not have had loaded guns hanging on his wall, but that Turner, by pulling the trigger, whether accidentally or not, was the chief culprit and should therefore be made to pay for his carelessness. I welcomed the opportunity to soothe him and could not help feeling pleased that, for the time being anyway, he was no longer *persona grata* at The Farm.

I had been worrying over my squeamishness about killing

destructive animals, but when I found out that Turner also suffered from his own form of aversion, I was comforted, deciding that the changes accompanying the process of growing up were bearable if they could be shared.

One morning we wandered down to the stable to find that a butchering was to take place, an event which in the past would have delighted our savage young hearts. In former days we would have helped to skin the slaughtered steer, watching absorbedly as the red hide peeled away under the knife's touch to reveal the iridescent membrane covering still-warm flesh. Nor did we feel disgust when the great coils of intestines writhed out on to the ground in a liquid rush and a sound of escaping gases. It all seemed to us a natural procedure, and if at a hog-butchering the wild scream of the victim shook us with an obscure feeling of pity, it did not prevent us shortly afterwards from vying with one another in trying to blow up the pig's rubbery lungs.

This day, we arrived at the corrals just as Roy Schoonover shot a young heifer in the head. We watched for a minute as he bent down to cut the throat, releasing a torrent of bright blood that darkened slowly into purple-black as it coagulated. I struggled in my mind with an old recurring problem—what happened in that tiny interval between life and death? An instant ago, that heifer had been a warm, living creature, moving on strong legs, her soft eyes wide with alarm, then the shot, and now only a leaden stillness—a nothingness.

There was a strangled sound beside me, and I turned to see Turner walking quickly away. I followed him, waiting sympathetically while he was sick into a manure pile, offered my handkerchief and murmured anxious, maternal words.

"I'm sorry," he said, rubbing a hand over his short blond crop of hair. "Let's go for a ride, shall we? I don't feel like seeing any old butchering."

We saddled our horses quickly and rode up the North Fork of Trinchera Creek, saying nothing for a time. Then I asked him the question foremost in my mind.

"If it made you sick to see Roy shoot the heifer, why don't

you feel the same way when you shoot prairie-dogs and rabbits? "

He shook his head forlornly.

"Honest, I don't know. Maybe it's because the heifer looked so big and alive. You can't see so well when the bullet hits little animals. Besides, that's hunting, isn't it?"

I agreed half-heartedly, sensing that Turner felt as dissatisfied with his argument as I did. He was looking better now, the usual ruddy colour back in his cheeks.

"Anyway, you were able to be sick. I always feel lots better if I can throw up," I said. "Remember the kittens?"

Our horses started to fidget, twitching their ears and dancing a little, and a few minutes later we heard galloping behind us.

It was Chal, and we stopped to wait for him.

"You never told me you were going riding," he said with a grieved expression. "I thought you'd be watching the butchering."

Turner ignored this. "Does Mother know where you are?"

Where Chal was concerned, we all maintained a protective attitude, for not only was he the youngest, but there was a certain fragile quality about him, a delicacy of bone and feature, which made him appear more vulnerable than the rest of us. He had soft, brown eyes and dark hair and was by nature gentle, humorous and sweet-tempered.

We rode on for a time indecisively until Turner, assuming the leadership as was his habit, announced that we would visit our cave on Lesser Koodoo.

Lesser Koodoo was the cliff-crowned mountain rising straight up from the foothills nearest to our house. Although it was known locally simply as Cat Mountain, my father had years before rechristened it Lesser Koodoo Khya Ram, Commonly-Called-The-High-Behind, and to us it was always the Lesser Koodoo. I have never been sure of the name's origin, but it probably arose from an obscure joke between Aunt Edith and my father in relation to the slightly cross-eyed head of a species of South African antelope (no doubt the Greater Koodoo) that had hung for years on the wall of the Schleys' living-room.

We left our horses near the summit and scrambled up the

steep sides, pulling ourselves along with the help of scrub-oak bushes.

"Watch out for rattlers," said Turner unnecessarily, for we all knew the parched slopes, littered with boulders, were typical snake territory. Furthermore, it was from this mountain that we sometimes heard the solitary, blood-chilling scream of a mountain lion, and remembering this, I glanced up fearfully at the cliffs above us. But that day we encountered nothing more exciting than horn-toads and a huge bull-snake that slithered abruptly across our path, causing a moment of panic until we remembered that it was harmless.

We arrived at the cave's mouth, breathless and sweating. The boys entered at once, but I paused to wipe my glasses which were steamed over by the heat of my body. When my vision cleared, I saw that Turner was looking at me with a frown.

"Heck!" he said in a puzzled, disappointed voice, "it's so small. I'm sure it was bigger the last time we were here."

"Silly, it couldn't have changed."

I pushed past him into the cave. At the far end Chal, who had never been there before, was examining a cluster of amber-coloured stalactites, exclaiming with delight. I glanced around the cave. There was a rank smell and hundreds of dried rabbit-droppings lay about the dusty floor. Surely, I thought, there had been a greater depth before—a density of light, a suggestion of further passages cutting deeply into the mountain's heart, like—like the cave in *Tom Sawyer*! Of course, that must be it. We were mixing them up in our minds. I hastened to explain my theory to Turner who was sitting dejectedly at the lip of the cave, chin on knees.

"Maybe," he said sceptically, when I had finished. "But it's funny. This summer lots of things seem different to me."

He gave me an anxious, sideways look. "The other day I saw Uncle Bryant walking up the road to our house and all of a sudden he looked old and kind of small, I mean he was still Uncle Bryant, but he was different too."

"You shut up, Turner Schley!" I said, in a fierce voice. "Just

because he works too hard, you think he's different. Well, he's not, you hear me? He's not!"

I felt the sting of tears against my eyelids, and fought them back, trying at the same time to subdue the hateful thought rising in my mind—that Turner was right and that I too, without admitting it to myself, had seen a change in my father. All our lives he had seemed to us a god-like being, capable of anything, endowed with all the virtues possible to man, and we loved him with a constant and unshakable devotion. Now the first doubt had been clearly stated in words that even I, with every part of mind and heart striving loyally to cry negation, must recognise as the truth. He was no longer the flawless being of our extreme youth, but an ordinary man, subject to the inroads of time, shoulders a little bowed, hair gone grey at the temples. I remembered how this cruel revelation had shocked my awareness only a few days ago when I had seen him coming up the hill to the stable. He wore his old Panama hat, a favourite substitute in hot weather for the Stetson, and was walking slowly, looking at the ground. Then he glanced up and saw me and immediately the expression of worried abstraction vanished from his face, the crow's-feet about his eyes deepened with a smile and he said, "Hello, daughter, want to take a ride?"

"We used to think when we were little kids he could fight anyone with one hand tied behind his back. Remember?"

Turner was throwing pebbles one by one down the mountain side, and we watched them as though they were of vital importance to us both.

"Well, what do you expect!" I blurted out, still with my fierce, defensive voice. "Would you like him to be a big bully like Rpy Schoonover!" and Turner shook his head wordlessly.

"Look what I've found!"

Chal emerged from the cave to show us a lump of what looked like cloudy glass, hexagonal in shape. Turner examined it eagerly.

"Golly!" he said. "Do you suppose it's some kind of a crystal? We'd better show it to Uncle Bryant. He'll tell us."



"Yes, Uncle Bryant will tell us," echoed Chal, his eyes big with interest.

"Come on, let's hurry!"

Turner got to his feet and we followed in a rush of sand and small rocks, sliding on our bottoms and uttering whooping sounds of combined pleasure and excitement, while the horses, frightened by our loud approach, snorted and pulled at the tethered reins.

When my father identified the stone as an ordinary form of quartz we were not really disappointed, but listened interestedly as he told us about the various minerals to be found in our hills, crowding close as he turned the piece of quartz over in his strong, short-fingered hands. Afterwards, we came away chatting contentedly and Chal, voicing my thoughts, and perhaps Turner's as well, said, "Uncle Bryant always knows, doesn't he?" and we agreed solemnly.

The image we had carried about in our minds for so long may have tumbled from its pedestal; but we would not miss it. In the place where it had stood we discovered my father—warm, real, unalterably kind and humanly fallible, and realised with surprise that he had been there all along.

The rest of the summer passed in a long succession of peaceful days, the last we were ever to spend all together. Then, one morning, I climbed out of my bedroom window—my habitual method of exit—to discover the first snow sparkling on Trinchera Peak and knew that the time was at hand for the Schleys' departure. Turner and I exchanged an off-handed kind of embrace, said we'd be seeing each other next summer and I watched the car until it had vanished from sight down the valley.

Winter in Colorado Springs was the usual long interval between leaving the ranch and returning to it. This year it seemed to move even more slowly for my father was away a good deal, and I needed his presence to balance the relationship between my stepmother, my two small half-brothers and myself. Sometimes there would be a letter which I would read over and over before storing it away with other treasures, including

a jack-knife, a ten-dollar gold piece and my abortive attempts at verse.

"Here I am in the metropolis of the west," he wrote from Chicago, "with all its smoke and noise. . . . It is too bad we can't all be together, but when Business pulls the strings I must dance. I hope your turkey & all the good things you eat with it agree with each other & with you. If not take castor oil. An empty house is better than a bad tenant.

"A great many trains run out of Chicago daily which is a great blessing. Much love from Your lonely Dad."

When I was told that this would be my last year at Cheyenne and that next winter I too would be travelling east to attend boarding-school in Connecticut, I received the news without enthusiasm. In fact, I considered rebelling, until informed that I would be spending my Easter holiday in Baltimore with Aunt Edith and the boys, a plan which made up a little for having to contemplate a future when I would be separated by two thousand miles from my father and Trinchera. In the meantime there was another summer to look forward to, which, I decided optimistically, was really all that mattered.

But when it arrived, it brought as well an unexpected disappointment. The Schleys were not to come to Trinchera that year. Turner was convalescent after an operation for a severe attack of appendicitis and Aunt Edith had also been ill and still did not feel well enough to make the journey.

Fortunately for me, there was much to be done on the ranch and I was able to forget my disappointment and subdue some of the new restless feelings of adolescence by halter-breaking a succession of colts, schooling polo ponies and riding hard in the hills. I also read a great deal, chewed my nails and mooned about the house while my stepmother observed me anxiously and talked brightly about the fun I would have in boarding-school.

Half-way through the summer, she took me up to Colorado Springs to buy some much-needed clothes for my journey east, and Turner and I had a joyful reunion. I stayed with the Schleys for two weeks, and during that time we formed a jazz band

called the Pink Parrots, with myself at the piano, Turner on the "drum," which consisted of a metal lampshade, and Chal and Maurice Hager howling through combs enveloped in toilet-paper.

I felt a little shy of this new Turner, tall, thinner and a little feverish in his behaviour. He told me that he had learned to dance and although the doctor had forbidden him, he had decided to pay no attention. He offered to teach me, but I refused, feeling awkward and ashamed, preferring my less conspicuous position as piano-player, and the walls shook as we bellowed, thumped and screeched:

You can bring Pearl,  
she's a darn nice girl,  
but don't bring Lulu!

"See you in Baltimore," he said as I departed again for Trinchera, and I stared at him, for at that moment Baltimore seemed to me as remote as China.

I made the trip to New York alone and in abject fear, too shy even to go to the dining-car for my meals. Changing trains in Chicago was a lively nightmare in which I was certain that I would not know which direction to take. It was like a recurrence of the time before I received my spectacles.

The first term I bombarded my father with letters, begging him to take me away. Never, never, never! I wrote, could I live through it. He answered with gentle admonishments, a little at a loss, trying to comfort me with news of the horses, the ranch, the elk he had seen among the piñons. At Christmas when I realised he meant to send me back, and that I would not see him again until the summer, I wept hysterically, and as the train crossed the snow-covered prairies I looked out of the window broodingly, feeling martyred and alone. This time Mrs. Gibb met me in New York and took me to dine at Pierre's and to see the Astaires in *Lady Be Good*, and I forgot to be unhappy and wrote Turner an account of my adventures, feeling worldly and grown up.

Just before leaving for Baltimore to spend the Easter vacation, I received a letter from Turner.

"I'm in bed with a sore throat," he wrote, adding that it amounted to nothing and that he could hardly wait for the day of my arrival.

I reached Baltimore to find Aunt Edith waiting for me at the station, and as I looked into her face my heart plunged with a sudden, instinctive fear.

"Turner——?"

"He's in the hospital. He wants to see you."

But when we got there he had passed into a coma. I stared at his face, trying to see something that I knew, searching for a sign of recognition.

He died later that night, and next morning I sat by the window looking out on a spring morning, hearing bird-song and the sound of hammers from where they were building a house across the street, heart-broken and ashamed because I lived, while he, by some imponderable, vicious stroke of fate, was dead.

"Lost and gone for ever," I thought stupidly, and began to cry.

## XIV

### THE HAUNTED CABINS

THE TERMS middleman, remittance-man and gentleman's agreement have from early childhood been associated in my mind with something unpleasant, even though I am now able to be somewhat less subjective about them.

"It's the middleman," my father would say whenever the price of beef cattle declined, and I visualised a large individual, with features resembling those of Roy Schoonover, sitting in gross complacency somewhere between the summer ranges and the Denver stock-yards, maliciously deflecting the flow of both cattle and money.

The definition of a remittance-man, on the other hand, was an easier matter because we had one working for us, a tall, lean Englishman who called himself Colonel Nutting, with a British public-school accent, a large British nose, a neat moustache and cold blue eyes. The lines of his face all ran downwards and when he smiled one felt the effort caused him considerable pain. He first crossed our path in Colorado Springs, looking like a fugitive from the London War Office or a lone sequel to *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*. I am not certain how the acquaintance began, but it was not long before I grew accustomed to the sight of his hungry face, hungry being the operative word, since he always managed to ring the door-bell just as we were sitting down to a meal. In spite of my stepmother's annoyance—for she never learned to like him—the Colonel would be invited by my father to share our food—an invitation which he accepted with an eagerness only partially concealed by remarks such as, "My dear chap, I wouldn't dream of intruding, had no idea it was so late"; or "Wouldn't think of causing you and your good

lady any bother"; or "What! Tiffin time already! Frightfully careless of me!" But it always ended with his sitting down to eat a large meal, talking between or through mouthfuls with my father since my stepmother remained aloof and frigidly silent. His manner was not endearing, being both facetious and condescending, and he had a habit of laughing at his own rather obscure jokes with a heartiness that made us uncomfortable. After my father had given me what was undoubtedly a purposely vague explanation of the Colonel's past, saying merely that he was a "black sheep" and lived on an allowance from relatives in England, I felt a little sorry for him, seeing him as unwanted, unloved and forced to roam the face of the earth for ever. Even so, I disliked him, and suffered a slight shock when my father employed him to break-in and school the two-year-old horses on Trinchera.

"How can you, Bryant!" exclaimed my stepmother, but he only smiled and said, "Nutting's a first-rate horseman."

Once on the ranch, the Colonel exchanged his slightly worn but beautifully tailored tweeds for the most flagrant type of drug-store cowboy outfit—cream-white Stetson hat, red or green shirts, a bright silk handkerchief around his scrawny neck, fawn-coloured trousers and cowboy boots heavily embroidered in large white hearts surrounded by horse-shoes. In cold weather he added a lumber jacket in an enormous pattern of garish plaid and strutted about with a strange mocking smile which caused me to wonder whether he was making fun of us or of himself.

When my father was there I suffered the Colonel's presence gladly, but when he was absent I avoided our new employee whenever possible, for I was jealous of his proprietary manner towards the horses, and, even while I recognised his undoubted skill, could never quite accustom myself to seeing him in charge.

During the Colonel's first winter on Trinchera, my father was asked by a wealthy widow of our acquaintance to let her spoiled seventeen-year-old son work as a ranch hand on Trinchera. It would "do him so much good," she insisted, would toughen and make a man of him. After some hesitation my father consented, and the boy, whom I knew and from whom I learned

the story later, was sent to the ranch to act as assistant to Colonel Nutting. For a time all appeared to be going well, then with the sudden return of John, as I shall call him, to Colorado Springs, a scandal emerged which sent my father hurrying to Trinchera and ended by the disappearance from our midst of Colonel Nutting.

The story of his downfall was not a pretty one, although, as my father used to say, who are we to judge? The Colonel turned out to be a flagellant, which unhappy perversion may or may not have accounted for the cold light in his eyes and the difficult, mocking smile which I sometimes thought was directed at himself. Whatever the explanation, he must have already received the main burden of his punishment, because, of all the social pariahs whom my father had taken under his wing, the Colonel was the best equipped by education and intellect to understand the sadly complicated nature of his weakness.

It was in the summer following Turner's death that I began to connect a "gentleman's agreement" with the two other phrases, eventually deciding that an agreement so called must be suspect from the beginning, since it appeared to be so easily broken. The circumstances, needless to say, involved money for the upkeep of the ranch, but when the moment came for the agreement to bear fruit, all gentlemen concerned seemed to have been inflicted with violent amnesia. The result was a period during which there was no money and what looked to be no future for us on the ranch.

I was at first only vaguely aware of impending disaster, not having altogether recovered from Turner's death. But little by little I saw that things were not as usual, even though on the surface the change was not noticeable. To begin with, my father's secretary, Mr. Manuel, had been dismissed after eight years without any apparent reason; the ranch hands who worked all year round riding fence or mending roads had also disappeared, and, when, half-way through the summer, my father unprecedentedly shipped away a train-load of cattle to Denver, there was only a skeleton outfit to handle the job. The event was in itself enough to make me wonder and since the shipment was

made from Fort Garland, the population gathered to stare and speculate, while rumours began to circulate from place to place. It was not long before one of these reached my ears, conveyed by Chal who had heard it from the loquacious Blondie, who, no doubt, had picked up some gossip from her father. It seemed, said Chal tensely, that everyone thought we were in such a bad way that Trinchera would shortly become a dude ranch in order to survive or, infinitely worse, might be put up for sale!

Shocked by the news from my current apathy, I listened in horror, refusing to believe the possibility to be anything but extremely remote. Nevertheless, as I thought it over, the rumour fitted in much too well with what had been taking place that summer and I wished that my father could be present to explain things. But he was away on some obscure business involving a machine which, he had told me, miraculously cut and bound the wheat simultaneously and was called a "Shocker." Now, it crossed my mind that this too was connected with the general state of affairs and that he hoped to make money by marketing the machine.

"Why doesn't anyone tell us what's happening? I said. "We're old enough to know if anything's gone wrong."

Chal nodded agreement. "That's what I'd like to know. Grant is as dumb as we are and I haven't wanted to bother Mother——"

His voice trailed away, but I understood. Aunt Edith, quiet and pale, seemed that summer to be living in another world than ours, spending most of the day lying on a long chair, watching the mountains. We respected her desire for solitude because, apart from the blow she had received from Turner's death, it was common knowledge that her health had greatly declined.

"Perhaps you should have stayed in a lower climate," blurted out one day, worried by the greyish tinge of her complexion.

She looked at me from her kind eyes, smiling faintly. "My dear child, I've tried, but it's quite impossible. The mountains are in my blood."



For a time Chal and I discussed the situation gloomily, then he left to go fishing and I wandered down to the stable. On the way I met Roy Schoonover leading my red roan mare, Noma, harnessed and dragging a length of chain, and I stopped to look at them in resentful astonishment.

"Roy, you shouldn't be working Noma! She's not well enough. Daddy said you shouldn't!"

Noma had recently recovered from a throat infection and had been living in quiet seclusion until her strength returned.

Roy smiled blandly. "Oh, I don't reckon a little work'll hurt her. I'm jest gonna snake me out a bitty firewood."

"Well, why didn't you use one of the mules?"

But he walked on without replying and I knew it was because he was too lazy to fetch the mules from pasture. "Damn you to hell, Roy Schoonover!" I thought. "You wait until my father gets back!"

It seemed like open insurrection for Roy to ignore an order of my father's and I turned the matter over and over in my mind, seeing it as yet another small break in the old, secure life. I had never cared much for Roy, and over a period of years our relationship had deteriorated to the point of enmity. I remembered the kittens and another occasion when he had taken me with him to the alfalfa field where Pet, a Jersey cow, stood bloated, swaying and on the point of death after a surfeit of green hay. Without warning me, Roy had opened his knife, felt along her distended flank with a large, sure hand, and then plunged the blade to the hilt, withdrawing it quickly as a stream of half-digested matter gushed out from the wound. I screamed, thinking he was killing Pet, but he grinned at me, saying, "That'll learn her to stay out of places she don't belong."

It had been an expert piece of surgery and had undoubtedly saved the cow's life, but I never quite forgave him for not forewarning me, or for the gloating expression on his face as he aimed the knife.

Now I waited for his return with Noma from the woods, and when she had been unharnessed and turned into the corral, hung about to watch anxiously for any signs of recurring illness.

## DAYS OF ELK AND BUFFALO

In the long series of animals I had possessed during my life on Trinchera there had been frequent deaths from illness, accident or murder, and I had mourned them all and remembered each of them with a special affection. Shep, my first dog, had died from exposure after being caught in a trap. There had been the two peppies, devoured by a mountain lion; Foxy, who was half-coyote, the hounds, Jiggs and Jack, all three shot to end their misery after an encounter with a porcupine which had filled them full of quills; and among the horses, from the fat little Shetland ponies, now grey at the temples, to my present horse, a bad-tempered chestnut named Baldy, over whom, for some reason, I was the sole person who had any control, there had always been an equal division of love. Yet of them all, Noma remained my favourite, and from the beginning I had showered her with a devotion which sometimes made me the butt of good-natured teasing. This curious distinction of emotion may have been caused by the fact that Noma arrived in my life at a period when I was feeling neglected, without being fully aware of it, shortly after the birth of my elder half-brother David. On one occasion, during a dry spell when there was fear of drought and a shortage of grass, I lay awake for a long time worrying about Noma and the possibility of her starving to death. Around three o'clock in the morning I dressed and climbed out of my bedroom window, feeling my way in the dark to the meadow where she grazed a mile and a half from the house. There I tied my necktie around her throat and led her back to the stable where I piled hay into her stall and stayed with her as she ate it, finally falling asleep in the straw at her feet.

When her first foal was weaned I suffered with her as she rushed frantically along the corral fence, calling desperately to her child, or sought me out, pushing me with her head as though expecting me to rectify what must be a hideous mistake. Now after three foals and a long life she had reached a point where, as an elderly lady, she could look forward to a period of rest with only intermittent, gentle rides, or, being broken to harness, occasional mild work.

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I stayed to watch her as the afternoon went by, noting that her coat was staring and rough and that she seemed to be having difficulty in breathing. John Roybal stopped for a moment, shaking his head.

"One sick horse," he said glumly.

I wandered away for a moment to look on as Reilly, our present horse-trainer, brought in a bunch of mischievous, soft-eyed yearlings, and when I returned a terrible change had taken place. Noma was standing with her head thrust into the air, her mouth open, her flanks drawn up by a muscular contraction until they almost met. She was fighting to breathe and her eyes protruded from her head and as I stared, horror-struck, she turned and with a blind, convulsive movement began to climb the fence, battling grotesquely at the bars with her forelegs until she fell backwards, only to struggle once more to her feet. This time she staggered downhill to the stream, falling half into the water, and I screamed and rushed down to hold her head above the stream's surface, calling frantically for help. In a minute Roy came running and knelt beside us.

"She's a gonner," he said. "It's the strangles. Reckon I'll have to shoot her."

"No, oh no!"

But I knew it had to be done, only why must it be Roy!

"Reilly will do it. Call him!" I said desperately.

"Am't Reilly's job," said Roy. "'Sides, he's gone back down to the field."

Something like compassion appeared briefly in his eyes.

"Don't worry, kid, I'll make it the first shot."

I looked at him with hatred. "It's your fault!"

He paid no attention but walked heavily away to fetch the rifle and I stayed by Noma, stroking her head helplessly.

When Roy returned with the gun, I hid in one of the stalls, waiting for the shot, and when it came, gasped involuntarily as though it had been meant for me. I continued to wait, hearing the sound of harness and Roy's voice, knowing the familiar routine following a shooting was in process, and that Noma, my friend and beloved companion, was on her way to

the Bone Yard. A long time afterwards, I emerged from the stall, casting a quick look at the place where she had been lying. Roy, seized by some obscure sense of decency, had sprinkled sawdust over the patches where her blood had soaked the ground, but his efforts made no difference in my feelings. In fact, I was aware only of a general numbness, and when later I arrived at the Schley house, where I was expected for supper, it was with an almost matter-of-fact voice that I announced the news of Noma's death, accepting the general sympathy quite calmly.

Once at the table, however, I realised that my emotions were undergoing a change and that I was in imminent danger of disgracing myself by bursting into tears. I struggled to keep them back, grateful to Aunt Edith's habit of candlelight which helped to hide my features. In the end it was Chal who fractured my control by saying, "You'd better tell Uncle Bryant about Roy when you get back, he'll fix him," and to my shame I felt the tears begin to flow.

Grant noticed them first and gave me a slight kick under the table, warning me, I knew, to conceal my miserable state from Aunt Edith, and after a moment I saw from the look of disgust on Chal's face that he too was aware of my collapse. Presently, following a stifled sob or two, Grant said in a severe voice, "My gosh, Florrie, you ought to know better at your age," and Chal added, "It's too bad, but Noma was only a horse."

I nodded convulsively, wanting to stop my foolish display of sorrow, wishing I could explain to them that it was not only my horse for whom I wept, but Turner and the ranch and my father and all the frightening inexplicable change that was threatening the roots of my security.

After an interval of silence broken only by my sniffles, Grant said sharply, "Oh, stop feeling sorry for yourself!" and at the same moment Chal accused me of being silly and to both criticisms I could only nod in wordless agreement.

"Boys."

Aunt Edith's quiet voice came suddenly. "Leave her alone."

She looked at me unsmilingly. "I know it helps to cry sometimes, but if you feel you must, go outside on the porch."

Later on, as I sat mournfully on the steps of the porch, she came out.

"Better now?" she asked, and then bent to give my head an unaccustomed caress. "Never mind, honey," she said gently. "It's all part of growing up."

I cannot remember now whether I ever told my father about the part Roy played in Noma's death. By the time he came home the edge of my grief was dulled, and although I continued to dislike Roy, I found that I could not be altogether immune to the memory of his efforts of repentance.

My father, when pressed for information about the state of the ranch, at first pretended there was nothing seriously wrong, stressing the success we had had with a shipment of young polo ponies to the east, and laughing when I suggested that we might be forced to take dudes as a means of supplementing our income.

Finally, however, after I had revealed my knowledge of the various changes, he admitted that "business was poor" but that he hoped great results from the Shocker. In the meantime, I was not to worry, and trusting him utterly, I went away satisfied.

The following spring Aunt Edith died in Baltimore and Grant and Chal went to stay with relatives in the East. The next summer I avoided their locked and empty house, unable to endure the silence and the memories.

My father was away for long periods, working on the development of his Shocker, and the ranch existence continued in his absence to move along in a disjointed manner, although by now it was evident that we were on the very edge of ruin. Everywhere there were signs of slow disintegration, as the wilderness began little by little to creep back. Fence poles rotted and were not replaced; the wire gates sagged from their staples and were left unattended; machinery rusted in the shed; hay-fields remained uncut and in the tack-room at the stable the rows of saddles and bridles gathered dust, for there was no one to keep them polished. From time to time I would attack the dirt with sponge and saddle-soap, but it was disheartening work and I felt it to be of little value when balanced against the increasing sense of calamity.

I felt listless and depressed, yet at the back of my mind was the thought that my father would return in triumph to save us and our future. I begged my stepmother to let me leave school, but when she pointed out that Tante had been paying the fees ever since my first year away and would generously continue to do so until my education was finished, I had to admit that the plan would serve no useful purpose.

Fear of having to abandon Trinchera pervaded my waking hours and I spent most of my days riding in the mountains, exploring the canyons and draws, leaving my footprints on the smooth sand, baptising them in my mind with loving names, remembering each of them by a special identification—a certain silver fall of willow leaves, a coyote's den or the pure, small fountain of a tiny mountain spring. Morning after morning I rode off alone, urged on by the desire to fill my eyes and memory with as much as I could before it was too late. I visited the Shannon baby's grave, now scarcely perceptible after the corrosion of years and weather, thinking how that tiny life, so quickly over, still remained the most indigenous among us all.

One day, I came across a deserted mining-shaft and leaned over its dark well, feeling a prickle of fear. Here was evidence of defeat, where others before us had sought to exploit the wilderness. I tossed a rock into the shaft and heard after a moment the echo of its fall. Near the shaft stood a deserted cabin and I walked over to examine it, pushing open the door slowly, hearing the sudden startled scamper of pack-rats. I had several times before come across these lonely half-ruined dwellings and knew them to be the old habitations of miners, scouts and trappers who long years before had followed Kit Carson on expeditions from Fort Garland or San Luis. The atmosphere of each cabin was the same—musty, rat-infested and haunted by dead hopes. I sat for a time on the door-step, watching a chipmunk and thinking about those early explorers, wondering in what way we who followed them were different, for it seemed now that we, no less than they, had been rejected.

Surely, I thought, our only guilt had been to love too much, for unlike our predecessors we had had the time and the desire

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to put down roots, to become part of a rare and splendid beauty which unless it yielded up its treasure for them remained only a barren, frightening landscape.

I stared up at the quiet foothills where long before any of us the Indians had hunted and made their camps, leaving no trace behind of struggle or thwarted greed since they had lived on equal terms with their surroundings.

Baldy came sidling towards me, stepping delicately, his head turned away to hold the bridle-reins above his hoofs. He stopped and looked at me with soft eyes and I noticed that his ears were jerking nervously. The chipmunk twittered and dived into a hole of the tree trunk where he had been sitting and I became aware of an ominous stillness in which the sound of the creek behind the cabin rose clearly. The air had darkened and I glanced up to see the sky had changed to a strange saffron colour, and knew a storm was about to break.

As I mounted Baldy, lightning split the sky with sudden brilliance and a great crash of thunder rolled across the mountains echoing from ridge to ridge in gradually decreasing volume. We started home at a gallop, for I expected a cloudburst. But no rain came, only a dry, sinister crackling, and I realised that I was in the midst of an electric storm. The lightning quivered and flickered over the foothills and from time to time sparks danced on Baldy's ears, causing him to snort and shy, while I felt my own hair drawing at the roots as we passed through the charged, living air. Once in the valley it grew easier and gradually I relaxed in my saddle as we left the storm behind us.

When I reached the stable I saw my father standing by Red's corral and I rushed to greet him joyrully. He was sunburned from his hours spent in the Dakota wheatfields behind the Shocker and at first I did not notice the tiredness in his eyes.

He looked up the valley to where the snows of Trinchera Peak gleamed white against the stormy sky. "I've missed it so much," he said softly. "It's good to be back."

Red whickered over his bars and my father turned back to stroke him. The stallion had aged, his back slightly swayed now, deep pockets above his beautiful intelligent eyes, but he still

held his head nobly and his coat gleamed with the old copper lustre.

"Good boy, good old bread-and-butter horse. Did I ever tell you why they call him that, Florrie? Because he always won eighty-five per cent. of his races."

I had often heard both question and answer, but never found my father's habit of repetition a tedious one.

"Yes, he's a wonderful animal, but he's getting old, aren't you, Red? Just like me. We're a couple of old men."

We walked down to the polo field to inspect the summer's foals and on the way I asked him about the Shocker.

"It's no go." He reached out to take my hand, holding it as we walked the way he used to when I was a small girl. "I'm afraid we'll have to sell Trinchera, daughter."

I took a deep breath. Well, here it was at last, I thought, and for a minute was blinded by tears. He put an arm about my shoulders and held me close without speaking, then let me go.

"Now," he said, "let's have a look at those colts."

Later that evening we all gathered at the front of the house to watch the sunset, my two small half-brothers, David and Teddy, rolling like puppies on the ragged grass of what had once been our lawn. I saw my father looking at them tenderly and I wondered with a heavy heart if he was thinking that he could no longer offer them the inheritance of his dreams.

As though sensing my look, he turned his head, sending me a quizzical smile.

"What do you say, daughter?" he asked, gesturing with his arm to include the grand sweep of Mount Blanca and Baldy, "shall we give it all back to the Indians?"

I felt puzzled, not sure whether he was joking or not.

Then he told my stepmother and me of a plan he had been considering for a long time, which was to approach the Agricultural Department in Washington to see if it would consider taking over Trinchera as a reservation for the Ute Indians.

It seemed to me a superb idea, for if we who loved it so much were not allowed to keep Trinchera, then the Indians should return to live among these mountains, for were they not, in the



last analysis, the real inheritors? I went to bed feeling oddly comforted.

The next day my father and I went for a ride and something occurred which opened my eyes with sudden cruelty to the realisation that he was failing in physical strength if not in spirit.

He was riding a three-year-old filly, one of Red's children, frisky and uncertain of temperament, and just as we left the stable she shied violently, throwing my father heavily to the ground. I slid from my own horse and rushed to where he still lay, his eyes a little dazed.

"A mere bag of shells, a mere bag of shells," he said, using his favourite interpretation of the word *bagatelle*. "Help me up."

But once on his feet, he leaned against me for support, and I noticed in alarm that his face was twisted in pain.

"Just a little dizzy spell," he said. "It will pass. Don't tell anyone."

He insisted, despite my protests, on remounting the filly and riding her for a few minutes at a hard disciplinary canter.

"Mustn't let a young horse do that more than once," he said as we slowed to a walk. "It'll get the habit."

I looked at him with a feeling of distress, for it seemed to me that he had been unreasonable and that the discipline was directed as much towards himself as his horse.

We rode up through a canyon above the South Fork, climbing a ridge where the bunch grass formed a pale gold background for the massed purple of wild aster and lupin and the scarlet brilliance of Indian paintbrush. My father stopped to gaze.

"Oh, lord, lord," he said softly. "Look at that. It's as though some giant artist had spilled his colours down the hillside."

We rode higher, passing the old scar where Turner and I had burned the tree, then followed a trail through the timber which my father had blazed years before. He pointed out the fresh marks of bear claws on the white bark of an aspen and reminded me of the time when we had come across the cinnamon bear and two cubs the last time we had ridden this way. A covey of mountain grouse roared up from under the feet of the startled horses and on our way down the ridge we saw fine buck

deer bounding out of sight between the trees. It was dusk when we arrived back at the corrals and as we emerged from the piñons a coyote floated like a puff of grey smoke across our path. Why was it, I wondered, that the rides with my father were always imbued with a special magic quality, as though the creatures of the wild chose freely to reveal themselves only when he was with me? I looked at him anxiously, wondering if the ride had tired him too much, but his face was serene and he seemed normal.

A few days later I returned to school, trying not to think that this might be my last farewell. But at Christmas my father told me the plan for an Indian reservation had been turned down by the authorities, even though the Utes to whom he had talked were enthusiastic.

"Perhaps they thought it was too good for the Indians," he said with an odd bitterness; then his expression changed. "Well, there are others after Trinchera. Next summer we'll be swarming with visitors."

I welcomed the news with mixed feelings, strongest of which was the thought that I was to be given another summer on the ranch no matter how undesirable the accompanying circumstances might be.

My father had been correct. From June to September we received a steady flow of prospective buyers who all seemed to be large cigar-smoking men in straw hats, and I surveyed them with hatred and rejoiced when they groaned about their saddle-sores after a day of riding through the fields or over the hills. They ate our food and cracked alien jokes; fished in the streams like overgrown boys playing hookey from school; took photographs of everything; stood in flabby circles around my father, nodding politely as they listened, but with their eyes sharpened for business; then drove away, leaving behind them a stale smell of cigar smoke and a sense of desecration.

The last of these visitors arrived from Oklahoma, their car hung with a large sign which read, "Watch Hooker Grow!" and for a time the house took on a feeling like a long meeting of the Chamber of Commerce.

## THE HAUNTED CABINS

But none of them bought the ranch and when the summer came to an end and the first fall colours turned the leaves to crimson, russet and gold, my father told us it was all over. Trinchera was ours no longer, but in the hands of receivers, and when we took the road for Colorado Springs it would be for the last time. We would move to California, he said. It was a fine climate. Perhaps he could have a small stable, not much, of course, just two or three horses—we would be happy, we would always remember how fortunate we had been—— But I saw the expression in his eyes and guessed the depth of his unhappiness, and when a little later he disappeared into the mountains alone I knew that he had gone to say goodbye.

“Expect me in three days,” he said to my stepmother. “I’m just going to blaze a trail or two. I’ll come back past Edith’s house. Watch for me there.”

But he did not come back the third day and we waited late into the night before deciding that he had probably climbed farther than he intended. The next day I stayed close by the road leading to the Schley house, lying in a tangle of clover, remembering the old days, imagining that a screen door banged on their porch and that I heard Turner calling for me to go fishing.

Towards four o’clock I began to worry and my fantasy began to paint a picture of my father lying ill or hurt somewhere in that huge solitude. Perhaps that would be the way he wanted it, I thought suddenly, and was seized by unreasonable fear. My stepmother wandered out to join me, her eyes anxious.

“I’m so worried, Florrie. He’s not well these days.” (So she had seen it too.) “I think I ought to send John or Roy to look for him. It’s so late.”

I looked up towards Trinchera Peak. A new fall of snow covered it below timber-line and the sky beyond was faintly touched by a pre-sunset flush.

“No,” I said, wondering where my confidence had come from. “Don’t do that. I’m sure he’ll be back soon.”

After all, I thought, could we blame him if he wished to linger in the mountains which he must leave so soon?

I felt strangely irritated with myself and I must have frowned, for my stepmother glanced at me in surprise.

"Well," she said doubtfully; then her face cleared and she cried, "Look! There he comes now!"

And there he was, riding slowly towards us past the corner of the Schley house, his pack-horse ambling along behind. He saw us and waved his hat, then broke into a trot.

"Were you worried?" he asked as we walked back from the stable. "I ran into a snowstorm and lost my way. Amazing to find snow this early so far below the peak."

He looked rested and clear-eyed. "Saw two elk," he went on, "and a lot of bear sign."

We left a week later and on our last night I climbed out through my window and wandered down to the red gate. The moon was full and the sagebrush had turned to silver. As I passed the polo field I heard a snort and turned to see the dim forms of a bunch of horses, their eyes shining like red and green jewels. "Goodbye, my friends," I thought. Ahead of me Lesser Koodoo loomed in the white glow and an owl floated past. I leaned against the gate and looked across the alfalfa field, like black velvet in the moonlight.

"Time for the third cutting," I thought, and wondered who would be there to see it harvested.

What was the use? How could I say goodbye to so much that I loved and would always love—fields, woods, streams, the animals, wild and domestic, the mountains, beyond anything the mountains! I picked a cluster of sagebrush and holding it against my lips, smelling the clean, tart fragrance, I walked slowly back to the house.

## XV

### THE END

As we left Cortez, that summer of 1929, my father was silent for a long time. I said nothing either, for I was thinking of a trip I had once taken years before with Aunt Edith and the boys to Taos in New Mexico, driving along a road very like this one, bumping together on the wide back seat, shouting out "Forty-nine Bottles" and "Clementine" at the tops of our voices, secure in the knowledge that in a short time we would be back on Trinchera and believing that the summer of our lives would continue for ever.

"Stop here a minute, Florrie," said my father abruptly.

I pulled up beside the dusty road and we both watched in pleased silence as a jack-rabbit sprang out from behind a clump of Spanish bayonet and shot off across the flat, ears pressed back, springing high and wide like a deer in the mountains. The blossoms of the bayonet plant were like clusters of white bells and in the quietness we heard the drone of hundreds of bees.

"Look!" said my father. "Yonder lies the Rio Saco, the southern border of Trinchera. If we drive a little farther I think the Spanish Peaks will come in sight."

I started the car again and a mile or two down the road we stopped again to look with nostalgic eyes on the blue-shadowed twin peaks, knowing that beyond them lay Mount Blanca and beyond that—I closed my eyes to search within my mind for that lost beloved sight, our valley and Trinchera Peak.

"They look quite close," said my father. "We could be there by this afternoon."

I gave him a quick look. "Do you want to go?"

## DAYS OF ELK AND BUFFALO

He shook his head tiredly. "No," he said. "What would be the point? Like putting salt on a wound."

"But if we had the money, wouldn't you want to live there again?" I asked thoughtlessly, then wished I had kept silent, noticing the pain in his eyes.

"No, not again." There are too many ghosts."

Shortly afterwards we drove off, bearing to the left, away from the mountains, and when I glanced back some time later, they had already vanished beyond the horizon.